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**T H E**  
**E S S A Y S**

**O F**  
*Michel Seigneur*  
**Michael Seigneur de Montaigne,**

**Translated into ENGLISH.**

**T H E E I G H T H E D I T I O N ,**

**With very considerable**

**AMENDMENTS and IMPROVEMENTS,**

**From the most accurate and elegant French Edition of**

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# CONTENTS.

Chap.	Page
I. <i>OF Profit and Honesty</i>	I
II. <i>Of Repentance</i>	20
III. <i>Of Three Commerces, i. e. Familiarities with Men, Women, and Books</i>	37
IV. <i>Of Diversion</i>	53
V. <i>On some Verses of Virgil</i>	66
VI. <i>Of Coaches</i>	146
VII. <i>Of the Inconvenience of Greatness</i>	171
VIII. <i>Of the Art of Discoursing</i>	178
IX. <i>Of Vanity</i>	208
X. <i>Of managing the Will</i>	288
XI. <i>Of Cripples</i>	318
XII. <i>Of Physiognomy</i>	332
XIII. <i>Of Experience</i>	369
<i>The APPENDIX.</i>	445

ESSAYS



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# ESSAYS

O F

MICHAEL Seigneur de MONTAIGNE.

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## BOOK III.

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### CHAP. I.

#### *Of Profit and Honesty.*

**T**HERE is no man but at one time or other says a silly thing ; but the worst of it is when he affects it.

*Næ ille magno conatu magnas nugas dixerit \*.*

The Man in troth with much ado  
Has prov'd that one and one make two.

This does not touch me. My nonsense slips from me with as little care as it merits, and it is well it does so. I would quit it on a sudden for the little there is in it of value, and neither buy nor sell it for more than the weight. I speak on paper as I do to the first man I meet ; and that this is true, observe what follows.

Who would not abhor treachery when Tiberius would not admit of it in a matter of such importance to him †? He had

A perfidious action detested by Tiberius.

\* Terence Heauton, act iii. scene 9.

† Tacit. Annal. lib. ii. cap. 32.



word sent from Germany that if he thought fit, they would by poison rid him of Arminius, who was the most powerful enemy the Romans had, he having treated them very basely in the time of Varus, and being the only man that opposed their dominion in those countries. The answer he returned was, that it was the custom of the Romans to be revenged on their enemies by open force, sword in hand; not clandestinely, nor by fraud: wherein he preferred the thing that was honourable, to the profitable. He was (you will say) a hector. I believe as much; but that is no great wonder in the gentlemen of his profession. But the acknowledgment of virtue is no less valid by its coming from the lips of him who hates it, forasmuch as truth forces it from him; and if he will not sincerely embrace it, he puts it on at least by way of ornament.

Human policy  
so full of im-  
perfection that  
it needs vice to  
support it.

Our structure, both external and internal, is full of imperfection; yet there is nothing in nature but what is of use, not even inutility itself. There is nothing in this universe which has not some proper place in it. Our being is cemented with certain mean qualities; ambition, jealousy, envy, revenge, superstition, despair, have so natural a lodgment in us that the image of them is discerned in the brute beasts; nay cruelty itself, a vice so much out of nature, for even in the midst of compassion, we feel within us an unaccountable bitter-sweet titillation of ill-natured pleasure in seeing another suffer; and even children are sensible of it.

*Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis  
E terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem ||.*

'Tis sweet from land to see a storm at sea,  
And others sinking whilst ourselves are free.

Whoever would divest man of the seeds of such qualities would destroy the fundamental conditions of human life. Likewise in all governments there are necessary offices,

|| Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 1, 2.

not



not only abject but vicious. Vices have their department there, and are employed as cement to connect us together like poison that is administered for the preservation of our health. If they become excusable, as being necessary for us, and because the public necessity disguises their real qualities, we are to resign this part to the strongest and boldest citizens, who sacrifice their honour and conscience, as the ancients sacrificed their lives, for the good of their country. We that are weaker play those parts that are more easy and less hazardous. The public weal requires that a man should betray, tell lies, and commit murder: let us leave this commission to men that are more obedient and more supple.

I have really been often vexed to see judges by fraud and false hopes of favour or pardon, draw in a criminal to confess his guilt; and to observe what recourse they therein have to tricking and impudence. It would be of good service to justice, and even to Plato himself, who countenances this manner of proceeding, to furnish me with other means more suitable to my inclination. It is a malicious kind of justice, and I think it is as much offended by itself as by others. I said not long since, in some company, that as I would be very sorry to betray any private man for the service of my prince, I would be very loth to betray my prince to any private man. As I have an aversion to cheat another, so I would hate to be deceived myself, and will not so much as furnish any pretext or occasion for it.

Malicious justice.

In the few concerns which I have had to negotiate betwixt our princes, in those divisions and subdivision by which we are at this time rent, I have nicely avoided

Montaigne a very tender con-  
scienced negotiator.

leading them into any mistakes of me, and their deceiving others by my mask. The people of this profession are the most reserved, and pretend to be the men of the greatest moderation, and the nearest conformity to the sentiments of those with whom they have to do. I speak sincerely what I think, and in my own manner; being a tender negotiator, and but a learner, who had rather fail of success, than be wanting to myself. Yet it has hitherto proved so lucky (for surely it is chiefly owing



to fortune) that few things have passed from hand to hand with less suspicion, and more favour and secrecy. I have an open manner, which readily insinuates itself, and gains credit upon the first acquaintance. Simplicity, and the naked truth, in what age soever, make their way, and find their account; and moreover the freedom of men who treat without any interest of their own is neither hateful nor suspected: and such may very well make use of the answer of Hyparides to the Athenians, when they complained of his rough way of speaking, "Gentlemen, do not regard whether I am free; but whether I am so from sincerity, and without any advantage from it to my own affairs ||." My freedom of speech has also naturally cleared me of all suspicion of dissimulation by its vehemency (leaving nothing unsaid, how pungent and cutting soever, so that I could not have said worse behind their backs) and by the full discovery it made of simplicity and indifference. I aim at no other advantage by my pleading than to plead, and tack no long arguments or propositions to it. Every plea plays its own part, hit or miss. For the rest, I am not swayed by any passion either of love or hatred to the great men, nor is my will influenced by the sense of any particular injury or obligation. I honour our kings with an affection that is simply loyal and respectful, being neither prompted to, nor restrained from it, by private interest; and for this I value myself. Nor does the general and just cause attract me otherwise than with moderation and coolness. I am not bound by such cogent and penetrating pre-contracts and engagements. Anger and hatred are not within the sphere of justice, and are passions of no use but to those who are not to be kept to their duty by mere reason, *Utatur motu animi, qui uti ratione non potest*. "He that cannot be guided by reason is governed by passion." All lawful intentions are temperate in themselves, if otherwise, they become seditious and unlawful. This is what makes me walk every where with my head erect, a frank countenance, and an open heart. It is a truth, and I fear not to

|| Plutarch, in his *Treatise of the Difference betwixt the Flatter and the Friend*, chap. 24.



confess it, I could, were it necessary, hold a candle to St. Michael, and another to his serpent †, after the manner of the old woman. I will follow the right side even to the fire, but will keep out of it if possible. Let Montaigne be overwhelmed in the public ruin, if it must be so; but if it be not necessary, I would thank my stars for his safety, and I make use of all the length of line which my duty allows me for his preservation. Was it not Atticus, who being on the just but losing side, preserved himself by his moderation in that universal shipwreck of the world, among so many various changes and revolutions? For a private man as he was, this is more easy; and upon an occasion of the like nature I think men are very excusable for not being ambitious to meddle or make.

For a man to be wavering and trimming, to keep his affection unmoved, and without inclination, in the disturbances of his country, and in a public division, I think it neither decent nor honest, *Ea non*

A neutrality in the distractions of one's country is not handsome nor honest.

*media, sed nulla via est, velut eventum expectantium, quò fortune consilia sua applicent.* “That is not taking the middle way, but really no way at all, like those who wait for the even of things in order to take their resolution accordingly ‡.” This may be allowed with respect to the feuds of our neighbours; and accordingly Gelo the tyrant of Syracuse suspended his resolution in the war of the Barbarians against the Grecians, keeping an embassy at Delphos with presents to observe to which side fortune would incline, and to take the critical minute to make the victors his friends §. But it would be a sort of treason to proceed after this manner in our own domestic affairs, wherein a man must necessarily be of one side or the other; though for a man to sit still, who has no office nor express command to urge him to action, I think it more excusable (and yet this is no excuse for myself) than to

† Montaigne means that he would be inclined to make his court to both the opposite parties, as the old woman did who offered one wax taper to St. Michael the archangel, and another to the dragon, which is represented fighting with St. Michael. This woman's action has given rise to a sort of proverb.

‡ Titus Livy, lib. xxxii. cap. 21.

§ Herodot. lib. vii. p. 498.



meddle in foreign broils, to which, however, according to our laws, no man is compelled. Yet even those who wholly engage themselves in such broils, may act with such temper and moderation that the storm shall fly over their heads without bursting on them. Had we not reason to expect as much from M. de Morvilliers, the late bishop of Orleans? And among those who behave valiantly at this time, I know some of so much candour and good-nature that they will continue steady, whatever may be the change or fate which heaven is preparing for us. I am of opinion, that it properly belongs to kings to quarrel with kings, and laugh at those bullies who out of mere wantonness push themselves into quarrels where the odds are so great. For a man has no particular quarrel with a prince, because he marches against him publicly and courageously, for his own honour, and according to his duty. If he does not love such a personage, he does better, he esteems him. The cause of the laws, and the defence of the ancient government, are always remarkable for this, that such even as for their own private interest disturb the state, excuse if they do not honour its defenders.

Vices disguised  
under the name  
of virtues.

But we ought not, though it is our daily practice, to call a bitterness and roughness of temper which spring from private interest and passion, by the name of duty, nor a treacherous and malicious conduct, by the name of courage. They call their propensity to mischief and violence by the name of zeal. It is not the cause by which they are warmed but their interest. They kindle a war, not because it is just, but because it is war.

The moderation  
which ought to  
be observed be-  
twixt those who  
are at variance.

Nothing hinders but men may behave commodiously and loyally too among those who are of the adverse party. Carry yourself, if not with an affection, always equal, (for it is capable of different degrees) at least moderate, such as may not so engage you to one party that it may challenge all that you are able to do; and content yourself also with a moderate degree of their favour, and to swim in the troubled water without attempting to fish in it.



## *Of Profit and Honesty.*

The other way of a man's offering himself to serve both parties is much more conscientious than prudent. Does not he to whom you betray another person with whom you was on good terms; know that you will do as much by him another time? He holds you for a villain, yet he hears what you have to say, draws intelligence from you, and works his own ends through your treachery; for double-dealing men are useful in what they bring, but care must be taken that they carry away as little as possible.

Double dealers.  
how far useful.

I say nothing to one party that I may not upon a fit occasion say to the other, with a little alteration of accent; and report nothing but things either indifferent or known, or what is of common consequence. I cannot allow myself for any consideration to tell them a lye. What is trusted with me as a secret, I religiously conceal; but I take as few trusts upon me of that nature as I can: the secrets of princes are a troublesome burden to those who are not interested in them. I am willing that they trust me with little, but that they rely with confidence upon what I tell them. I have always known more than I desired. One open way of speaking introduces another open way of speaking, and draws out discoveries like wine and love. In my opinion Philippides answered king Lysimachus very discretely, who asking him what share of his estate he should bestow upon him, "What you will," said he, "provided it be none of your secrets †." I see that every one grumbles and is displeased if the bottom of such affairs as he is concerned in be concealed from him, or that there be any reservation used. For my part I am content to know no more of the matter than what it is intended I should be employed in, nor do I desire that my knowledge should exceed or constrain my promise. If I must serve for an instrument of deceit; let it be at least with a salvo to my conscience. I am not willing to be reputed a servant so affectionate or so loyal as to be thought a fit tool to betray any man. He that is faithless to himself may well be so to his sovereign. But

Montaigne's behaviour among those of a different party.

† Plutarch, of Curiosity, chap. iv.



princes do not accept of men by halves, and despise services that are limited and conditional. There is no remedy for it. I tell them frankly how far I can go and no farther; for a slave I would not be but with reason, and yet I could hardly submit to that condition. They also are to blame who exact from a free man the same subjection and obligation to their service as they do from him whom they have made and bought, or whose fortune depends particularly and expressly upon them. The laws have rid me of a great anxiety; they have chosen me a fortune, and given me a guardian. Every other superiority and obligation ought to be relative to that appointment, and to be curtailed. Not that if my affection should incline me otherwise, I would consent to it immediately. The will and the desire make a law for themselves, but actions are to receive theirs from public authority. All this procedure of mine is somewhat different from our common forms; it would not be productive of great effects, nor would it be of long duration. Innocence itself could not in this age either negotiate without dissimulation, or traffick without lying: and indeed public employments do not at all suit my taste; what my profession requires I perform in the most private manner I can. While I was but young I was deeply engaged in business, and succeeded; but I retired from it in good time. I have since often avoided meddling in it, rarely accepted, and never asked it, turning my back to ambition; and, if not like the watermen who advance forward while they look backward, yet I am not so much obliged to my resolution as to my good fortune that I was not embarked in it: for there are ways less displeasing to my taste, and more suitable to my ability, by which if she had heretofore called me to the public service, and my own advancement in the world's opinion, I know I would in spite of all my arguments have pursued them. Such as commonly say in opposition to what I profess, that what I call freedom, simplicity, and plainness in my manners, is art and finesse, and rather prudence than goodness, industry than nature, good sense than good luck, do me more honour than disgrace, but really they  
make



make my subtilty too refined. Whoever has followed me close, and pried narrowly into me, I will give him up the point if he does not confess that there is no rule in their school that could answer to this natural motion, and maintain an appearance of liberty and licence so equal and inflexible through so many various and crooked paths, and that all their care and ingenuity could not have carried them through. The path of truth is but one and simple; but that of private advantage, and of the convenience of the business which a man has upon his hands, is double, uneven and casual! I have often seen these counterfeit and artificial liberties taken, but for the most part without success. They are apt to relish of the ass in Æsop's Fables, which, in emulation of the dog, fawningly clapped his two fore-feet upon his master's shoulders, for which his master gave him twice the number of blows with a cudgel, as the dog had caresses for the like sort of complaisance. *Id maximè quemque decet, quod est cujusque suum maximè* \*. "That is most becoming to every man, which is most natural to him." I am not willing to deprive deceit of its due rank; that would be mistaking the world. There are vices which are lawful, as there are many actions either good or excusable, that are in a strict sense illegal.

The justice which in itself is natural and universal, is otherwise, and more nobly regulated than that other particular and national justice, which is restrained to the necessity of our state affairs. *Veri juris germanæque justitiæ solidam et expressam effigiem nullam tenemus: umbrâ et imaginibus utimur* †. "We retain no solid and express model of true law and perfect justice; we have only a shadow and faint sketch of it;" insomuch that the sage Dandamys hearing the lives of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes, read, esteemed them to be great personages in every other respect but in their too great sub-

Universal justice much more perfect than particular and national justice.

\* Cicero de Offic. lib. i. cap. 31.

† Cicero de Offic. lib. iii. cap. 17.

§ He was an Indian sage who lived in the time of Alexander. What Montaigne here says of him is reported by Plutarch, who calls him Dandamis, in the Life of Alexander, chap. 20. It is the same in Strabo, lib. xv. where this Indian philosopher is called Mandanis. I have taken all this from M. de la Monnoye.



jection to the reverence of the laws, for the authority and support of which true virtue must abate very much of its original vigour ; and many vicious actions are introduced, not only by their permission, but also by their persuasion. *Ex senatus-consultis plebisque scitis scelera exercentur* §. “ The commission of certain crimes is authorized by the decrees of the senate and the common people.” I follow the common phrase, which makes a distinction betwixt things profitable and honest, so as to call some natural actions which are not only useful but necessary, dishonest and obscene.

Useful treachery preferred to honesty.

But let us proceed in our instances of treachery. Two pretenders to the kingdom of Thrace fell into a dispute about their title. The emperor hindered them from taking arms ; but one of them under colour of bringing matters to an amicable issue by an interview, having invited his competitor to an entertainment at his house, caused him to be secured, and put to death †. Justice required that the Romans should have satisfaction for this offence, but there was a difficulty in obtaining it by the common forms. What therefore they could not do lawfully, without a war, and without danger, they attempted by treachery, and what they could not do honestly they accomplished profitably. For this end one Pomponius Flaccus was pitched upon as a fit instrument ‡. This man, by dissembled words and assurances, having drawn the other into his toil, instead of the honour and favour which he had promised, sent him bound hand and foot to Rome. Here one traitor betrayed another, contrary to the common custom ; for they are full of mistrust, and it is not easy to over-reach them in their own art ; witness the sad experience we have lately had of this.

Treachery, how fatal to the man who abandons himself to it.

Let who will be Pomponius Flaccus, and there are enough that would ; for my part, both my word and my faith are like all the rest, parts of this common body : the best they can do is to serve the public, and this I take to be presupposed. But as, should one command me to take charge of the palace and the records, or to

§ Senec. Ep. 95.

† Tacit. Annal. lib. ii. cap. 65.

‡ Id. ibid. cap. 67.



enter upon the office of conductor of pioneers, I would say, that as to the former, it is what I do not understand, and as to the latter, that I am called to a more honourable employment: so likewise, should any one want me to lie, betray, and forswear myself, for some notable service, much more to assassinate or poison, I would say, if I have robbed or stolen from any one, send me forthwith to the galleys. For it is justifiable for a man of honour to say, as the Lacedæmonians did, when they were just on the point of concluding their agreement after their defeat by Antipater, “ You may impose as heavy “ and ruinous burdens upon us as you please, but if you “ command us to do things that are shameful and dishonest, you will only lose your time †.” Every one, to be sure, had taken the same oath to himself that the kings of Egypt made their judges swear solemnly; viz. that they would not decree any thing contrary to their consciences, though they themselves should command it §. In such commissions there is an evident mark of ignominy and condemnation: and whoever gives you such a commission does in fact accuse you; and he gives it you, if you understand it right, for a burden and a punishment. As much as the public affairs are amended by what you do, your own are impaired by it; and the better you behave for the public you act so much the worse for yourself. Nor will it be a new thing, nor perhaps without some colour of justice, if the same person ruin you who set you at work.

If treachery ought to be excused in any case, it is only so when employed in chastising and betraying the traitor. There are examples enough of treachery, not only where it was refused, but punished by those in whose favour it had been undertaken. Who knows not the sentence of Fabricius against Pyrrhus’s physician?

Treachery, in what case excusable.

But we find this also recorded, that a man has given command for an action which he afterwards severely revenged on the person whom he employed in it, re-

Instances of treachery punished by those who gave orders for it.

† Plutarch, in his Differences of the Flatterer and the Friend, chap. 21.  
§ Plutarch, in the remarkable sayings of the ancient kings, &c. towards the beginning.



jecting a credit and power so uncontrolled, and disavowing a servitude and obedience so sordid and abandoned. Jaropelc duke of Russia tampered with a gentleman of Hungary to betray Boleslaus king of Poland by putting him to death, or giving the Russians an opportunity to do him some notable injury. The gentleman acted very craftily in the affair; he devoted himself more than ever to the service of the king, obtained to be of his council, and one of his chief confidants. With these advantages, and chusing the critical opportunity of his sovereign's absence, he betrayed to the Russians the great and rich city of Wisliez, which was entirely plundered and burnt, with the total slaughter, not only of its inhabitants, without distinction of sex or age, but of a great number of the neighbouring gentry whom he had convened there for his purpose. Jaropelc being glutted with his revenge, and his wrath being appeased, for which however he had some pretence (for Boleslaus had very much provoked him, by a behaviour too of the like kind) and being gorged with the fruit of this treachery, taking into consideration the deformity of the act in a naked abstracted light, and looking upon it with a calm dispassionate view, conceived such a remorse and disgust, that he caused the eyes of his agent to be plucked out, and his tongue and privy parts to be cut off.

How Antigonus punished the soldiers of Eumenes, whom they had delivered up to him.

Antigonus persuaded the soldiers called Argyraspides to betray his adversary Eumenes their general into his hands. But after putting him to death, he himself desired to be the commissioner of the divine justice for the punishment of so detestable a crime, and consigned the traitors over to the governor of the province, with express command by all means to destroy and bring them to an evil end §. So that of that great number of men not one ever returned to Macedonia. The better he had been served by them the more wicked he judged the service to be, and the more deserving of punishment.

§ Plutarch, in his Life of Eumenes, chap. 9, to the end.



The slave who betrayed his master P. Sulpicius, by discovering the place where he lay concealed, was, according to promise, manumitted from Sylla's proscription, but by virtue of his edict, though he was no longer a slave, he was instantly thrown headlong from the Tarpeian rock ||.

A slave both rewarded and punished by Sylla for betraying his master.

And our king Clovis instead of armour of gold, which he had promised them, caused three of Canacro's servants to be hanged after they had betrayed their master to him, though he had set them upon it. They were hanged with the purse of their reward about their necks. After they had satisfied their second and special engagement they satisfy the general and first.

Another example of the like justice by king Clovis.

Mahomet the Second being resolved to rid himself of his brother out of a jealousy of his power, as is the custom of the Ottoman race, employed one of his officers in the execution, who choaked him by pouring water into his throat. When this was done, Mahomet, to make atonement for the murder, delivered the man who committed it into the hands of the deceased's mother (for they were only brothers by the father's side) who in his presence ript open the murderer's bosom, and in a fury ran her hands into his breast, and rifled it for his heart, which she tore out, and threw to the dogs. Even to the vilest of people it is a pleasure, when their end has been served by a criminal action, to patch it up with some mixture of goodness and justice, as by way of compensation and check of conscience. To which may be added, that they look upon the instruments of such horrid crimes, as upon persons that reproach them therewith, and aim by their deaths to cancel the memory and testimony of such practices.

Mahomet II. caused his brother to be murdered, and delivers over the person whom he employed to dispatch him, to be punished.

Now if perhaps you are rewarded, in order not to frustrate the public necessity of this extreme and desperate remedy, he who bestows the reward will notwith-

Traitors held accursed by those even who reward them.



standing, if he be not such a one himself, look upon you as a cursed and execrable fellow ; and concludes you to be a greater traitor than he does whom you betray ; for he feels the malignity of your courage by your own hands, being employed without reluctance and without objection. He employs you like the most abandoned miscreants in the office of hangman, an office as useful as it is dishonourable. Besides the baseness of such commissioners, there is moreover a prostitution of conscience. Sejanus's daughter being a virgin, and as such not liable to be put to death, according to the form of law at Rome, was first ravished by the hangman, and then strangled †. Thus not only his hand but his soul is a slave to the public convenience.

What Montaigne thinks of those who consent to be the executioners of their own kindred.

When Amurath the First, more severely to punish his subjects for having supported the parricide rebellion of his son, ordered that the nearest of kin to them should lend a hand in their execution, I think it was very honourable in any of them who chose rather to be unjustly deemed culpable for another's parricide, than to be obedient to the demand of justice for a parricide of their own. And whereas, at the taking of some little forts, I have seen rascals, who, to save their own lives, have been glad to hang their friends and companions, I have thought them in a worse condition than those that were hanged. It is said that Witholde, a prince of Lithuania, introduced a practice, that a criminal who was condemned to die should dispatch himself with his own hand, for he thought it strange that a third person, who was innocent of the crime, should be charged with, and employed in, homicide.

In what case a prince is excusable for a breach of his word.

When some urgent circumstance, and some impetuous and unforeseen accident, that very much concerns his government, compels a prince to evade his engagement, or throws him out of his ordinary duty, he ought to ascribe this necessity to a scourge of the divine rod. Vice it is not, for he has given up his own reason to a

† Tacit. Annal. lib. v. cap. 9.



more universal and powerful reason ; but certainly it is a misfortune : so that if any one should ask me what remedy ? “ None,” would I say, “ if he was really racked “ betwixt these two extremes,” (*sed videat ne quærat latebra perjurio* † ; “ but let him take care that he does “ not seek a pretence to cover his perjury”) “ he could “ not do otherwise ;” but if he did it without regret, it is a sign his conscience was seared. If there be a person to be found of so tender a conscience as to think so important a remedy too good for any cure whatsoever, I shall not like him at all the worse for it. He could not destroy himself more excusably and decently. We cannot do all we would, so that we are often obliged to commit the protection of our vessels to the conduct of heaven as to a sheet-anchor. To what more just necessity does he reserve himself ? What is less possible for him to do than what he cannot do but at the expence of his faith and his honour ? Things which perhaps ought to be dearer to him than his own safety, and the safety of his people. Though he should with folded arms call only upon God for his assistance, will he not have reason to hope that the divine goodness will not refuse the favour of his extraordinary arm to a hand that is so pure and just ? These are dangerous instances, rare and weak exceptions to our natural rules, to which there is a necessity of submitting, but with great moderation and circumspection. No private utility is of such importance as to deserve this effort of our conscience, though the public good well deserves it when it is very apparent and very important.

Timoleon made a proper atonement for his unnatural action by the tears he shed when he recollected that he had killed the tyrant with the hand of a brother : and it stung his conscience that he had been necessitated to purchase the public utility at so great a price as the wounding of his own integrity. Even the senate, which was by his means delivered from slavery, durst not determine positively on an action so considerable, which carried two aspects so important, and so contrary to each other. But the Syracusans, hav-

On what condition the senate of Corinth justified Timoleon when he killed his own brother.

† Cicer. Offic. lib. iii. cap. 29.



ing opportunely at that very time, sent to the Corinthians to solicit their protection, and to require of them a general fit to re-establish their city in its former dignity, and to clear Sicily of several petty tyrants, by whom it was oppressed, the senate deputed Timoleon for that service, with this artful declaration, "That if he behaved well in the government of the Syracusans, they would from that time pronounce by their decree that he had killed a tyrant, and on the contrary if he discovered an avaricious conduct they would try and condemn him for fratricide, as having killed his own brother ||." This whimsical conclusion carries along with it some excuse, by reason of the danger of the example, and the importance of so double-faced an action. And they did well to discharge their own judgment of it, or to support it by considerations of a conditional nature. Timoleon's deportment in his voyage rendered his cause still more clear, so worthily and virtuously did he demean himself in all respects. And the good fortune which attended him in the difficulties he had to overcome in this noble task, seemed to be put in his way by the Gods, as favourably combining for his justification. If any man's aim is excusable, this man's is.

The senate of Rome inexcusable for having broke a treaty of its own making.

But the profit by the increase of the public revenue which served the Roman senate for a pretence to the base conclusion I am going to relate is not sufficient to warrant such injustice. Certain citizens had by the order and consent of the senate redeemed themselves and their liberty by money, out of the hands of L. Sylla\*. The affair coming again upon the carpet, the senate condemned them to be taxable as they were before, and that the money they had disbursed for their redemption should never be repaid them. Civil wars often produce such vile examples, that we punish private men for having taken our words when we were in power; and one and the same magistrate makes another man pay the penalty of his change, though no fault of his. The schoolmaster lashes his

|| Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xvi. chap. 19. of Amyot's translation.

\* Cic. de Offic. lib. iii. chap. 22.



scholar for his docility, and the guide beats the blind man whom he leads by the hand. A shocking picture of justice!

There are some rules in philosophy that are both false and pusillanimous. The example that is proposed to us for preferring private benefit before the obligation due to faith once given, has not weight enough for the circumstance which they mix with it.

Whether faith that is pledged ought ever to give way to private advantage.

Robbers have surpris'd you, and, after having made you swear to pay them a sum of money, give you your liberty. It is wrong to say that an honest man may be quit of his oath without payment, after he is out of their clutches. The case is quit otherwise. What fear has once prevail'd on me to intend, I am oblig'd to keep the same purpose when I am no longer in fear. And though fear only forced my tongue, and not my will, yet am I bound to stand my word. For my own part, when my tongue has sometimes rashly out-run my thought, I have however made a conscience of disowning it; were we to act otherwise we would abolish all the right another claims to our promises. *Quasi vero forti viro vis possit adhiberi* \*. "As if violence could possibly operate upon a great heart."

The only condition in which private interest can excuse us for the non-performance of a promise is, when we have promised a thing that is wicked, and in itself unjust. For the claim of virtue ought to supersede the force of any obligation of ours.

In what case a private man is authoris'd to break his promise.

I have formerly placed Epaminondas in the first class of excellent men, and do not retract it. To what a pitch did he carry his regard for his private obligation, who never killed a man that he had overcome, who for the inestimable benefit of restoring the liberty of his country, made conscience of killing a tyrant or his accomplices, without the forms of justice; and who judg'd him to be a wicked man, was he ever so good a subject, who amongst his enemies, and in battle, spared not his friend and his host! His was a soul of a rich composition! He match'd good nature and humanity, even the

How very delicate Epaminondas was in the article of justice.

\* Cicer. de Offic. lib. iii. cap. 30.



most delicate in the school of philosophy, with the rudest and most violent of all human actions. Was it nature or art that softened a man of his great courage, high spirit, and obstinate constancy, against pain, death, and poverty, to such an extreme degree of good nature and complaisance? Dreadful, with fire and sword, he over-ran and subdued a nation invincible by all others, but himself; and yet, in the midst of such an expedition, he relaxed when he met his host and his friend. Verily he was fit to command in war, who could suffer himself to be checked with the curb of good nature, in the greatest heat of action, so inflamed and foaming with rage and slaughter. It shews an extraordinary greatness of mind to mix any idea of justice with such actions; but it was only possible for such steadiness of mind, as was that of Epaminondas, therein to mix good nature and the facility of the gentlest manners and purest innocence. Whereas one † told the Mammertines that statutes were of no force against men in arms; another ‡ told the tribune of the people, that there was a time for justice, and a time for war; a third, § that the noise of arms drowned the voice of the law; this man's ears were always open to hear the calls of civility and courtesy. Did he not borrow from his enemies || the custom of sacrificing to the Muses, when he went to the field of battle, that they might, by their sweetness and gaiety of temper, soften his severity and martial fury? After the example of so great a master, let us not make any sort of doubt that there is something unlawful, even against an enemy; that the common cause ought not to require all things of a man against private interest: *Manente memoria etiam in dissidio publicorum fœderum privati juris*. “The remembrance of private right subsisting even in the midst of public quarrels.”

*et nulla potentia vires*

*Præstandi, ne quid peccet amicus, habet †.*

Nor is there any pow'r can authorise

The breach of sacred friendship's solemn ties.

† Pompey; see Plutarch's Life of him, ch. 3. ‡ Cæsar, in Plutarch, ch. 11. § Marius, in his Life by Plutarch, ch. 10. || Lacedæmonians.  
‡ Ovid de Ponto, lib. i. epist. 7. ver. 37.



and that an honest man is not at liberty to do every thing for the service of his king, or of the common cause, or of the laws. *Non enim patria præstat omnibus officiis—et ipsi conducit pios habere cives in parentes* \*. “For the obligation to one’s country does not supersede every other obligation; and it is of importance to itself to have subjects that have a veneration for their parents.” This is an instruction proper for the present time. We need not harden our courage with this steel armour: it is enough that our shoulders are inured to it; it is enough for us to dip our pens in ink, and not in blood. If it be magnanimity, and the effect of an uncommon and singular valour, to condemn friendship, private obligation, a promise, and kindred, for the public weal, and in obedience to the magistrate; it is really sufficient to excuse us from it, that this is a greatness of soul which could have no place in the magnanimity of Epaminondas.

I abhor the furious exhortations of this other ungodly, venerable soul †.

*Dum tela micant, non vos pietatis imago  
Ulla, nec adversa conspecti fronte parentes  
Commoveant, vultus gladio turbate verondos.*

When swords are drawn, let no remains of love  
To friend, or kindred, your compassion move;  
Fear not to wound the venerable face  
Ev’n of your father, if oppos’d in place.

Let us deprive those that are naturally mischievous, bloody, and treacherous, of this colour of reason; let us set aside this wild extravagant justice, and stick to institutions that are more humane. What great things may not be accomplished by time and example! In an action of the civil war of Cinna, one of Pompey’s soldier having inadvertently killed his brother, who was of the contrary party, killed himself on the spot, as soon he §

\* Cic. de Offic. lib. iii. cap. 23. † Julius Cæsar, who, when in an open war against his country, with a design to subvert its liberty, cries out, “Dum tela micant,” &c. Lucan. lib. vii. ver. 320, &c.

§ Tacit. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 51.



knew it, for mere shame and sorrow. Some years afterwards, in another civil war of the same people, a soldier, who had killed his brother, demanded a reward for it from his officers ||.

The utility of an action does not render it honourable.

The utility of an action is but a sorry plea for the beauty and honour of it; and it is wrong to infer, that because such a thing is useful, it is therefore incumbent on every one to perform it; and not only a duty, but for his honour.

*Omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta §.*

All things are not alike for all men fit.

Were we to chuse the most necessary, and the most useful action of human society, it would be marriage; yet the saints think celibacy the more honourable state, excluding the most venerable order of men from it, as we set apart those cattle for stallions, which are the least in our estimation.

## C H A P. II.

### *Of Repentance.*

The world subject to continual changes.

**O**THERS form man, I only declare what he is; and I represent a particular one, very indifferently formed, and whom, were I to model again, I would certainly make very different from what he is; but what is done cannot be recalled. Now, though the features of my picture vary, there is still a likeness. The universe is but one perpetual motion, in which all things are incessantly wheeled about; the earth, the rocks of Caucasus, and the pyramids of Egypt, both by the general motion, and a particular one of their own. Constancy itself is no other than a more languid motion. I cannot be sure of my object: it is always disturbed and staggering by a natural giddiness. I take it in this point as it is at the instant when I

|| Tacit. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 51.

§. Propert. lib. iii. eleg. ix. ver. 7.  
con



consider it. I do not paint its being, I paint its passage; not a passage from one century to another, or, as the people say, from seven years to another seven; but from day to day, from minute to minute. I must accommodate my history to the time. I may soon change not only my fortune, but also my intention. It is a true copy of various and changeable accidents, and of imaginations that are wavering, and sometimes contrary. Whether it be that I am not then the man I was, or that I lay hold on the subjects with other circumstances and considerations, so it is that perhaps I may plainly contradict myself; but, as Demades said, I do not contradict the truth. Could my soul once take sure footing, I would not make an attempt, but would speak definitively and peremptorily; but it is always learning and making trial.

I propose a life mean, and without lustre. It is all one; all moral philosophy is as applicable to a vulgar and private life as to the most splendid. Every man carries the entire form of the human condition.

Why, and in what manner Montaigne undertakes to speak of himself in this book.

Authors communicate themselves to the people by some special and extraordinary work. I, in the first place, by my universal being, as Michael de Montaigne, not as a grammarian, a poet, or a lawyer. If men complain that I speak too much of myself, I complain that they do not so much as think of themselves. But is it reasonable, that being so particular in my way of living, I should pretend to make myself known to the public? And is it also reasonable that I should introduce into the world, where workmanship and art have so much credit and authority, the crude and plain effects of nature, and of frail nature too? Is not writing books without learning like building a wall without stone or brick? The fancies of music are carried on by art, mine by chance. I have this at least, according to discipline, that never any man treated of a subject, whereof he was more the master, than I am of that which I have undertaken; and that in this I am the most knowing man alive. Secondly, that never did any man penetrate deeper into his subject, nor more distinctly scrutinize into its parts and consequences,



quences, nor ever more exactly and more plainly arrived at the end which he proposed to himself in his work. To finish it, I need only apply to it with the fidelity which I have therein displayed with the utmost sincerity and purity. I speak the truth, not as much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little the more as I grow older; for, methinks, custom indulges my age with more liberty of prating, as well as of indiscretion in talking of a man's self. That cannot fall out here, which I often observe elsewhere, that the work and the artificer contradict each other. Has a man of so elegant a conversation written so filly a treatise? or are such learned writings the product of a man of so mean conversation, whose discourse is common, and who but seldom writes; that is to say, whose capacity is borrowed, and not his own? A man of learning is not learned in every thing; but the self-sufficient man is sufficient in every thing, even in ignorance. Here my book and I go hand-in-hand in one even pace. In other cases a work may be recommended and censured abstractedly from the workman, but not in this. He that touches the one, touches the other. He that shall judge of it without knowing him, will injure himself more than me. He who does know him gives me all the satisfaction I desire. I shall be more happy than I deserve, if I can only obtain thus much from the public approbation as to make men of understanding sensible that I was capable of making learning turn to my benefit if I had it, and that I deserved to have been assisted by a better memory. Be pleased here to excuse what I often say, that I seldom repent of any thing, and that my conscience is satisfied with itself, not like the conscience of an angel or a horse, but that of a man, always adding this check, not a check of ceremony, but of true and genuine submission, that I speak by way of inquiry, and for better information, referring myself for determination purely and simply to the common and authorised opinions. I do not teach, I only relate.

The sorrow  
which attends  
vice.

There is no vice that is really such which does not offend, and which a sound judgment does not blame; for there is so manifest a deformity and inconvenience in it, that perhaps they



they are in the right who say, that it is chiefly produced from ignorance and stupidity; so hard is it to imagine that a man can know it without abhorring it. Malice\* sucks in the greatest part of its own venom, and itself is therewith poisoned. Vice leaves a repentance in the mind, which, like an ulcer in the flesh, is always scratched till it bleeds; for reason effaces all other sorrows and griefs, but it begets this of repentance, which is the more grievous because it springs from within, as the internal cold and heat of agues and fevers is more intense and severe than what we feel from without. I not only hold those for vices (though not equally such) which both reason and nature condemn, but those also which have been made such in the opinion of men, however false and erroneous, if it is authorized by the laws and custom.

Nor is there any virtue the practice of which does not give joy to a well-disposed mind. There is really an inconceivable joy in a man's own breast upon his doing good, and a generous boldness that accompanies a good conscience. A soul that is daringly vicious may perhaps arm itself with security, but cannot supply itself with this complacency and satisfaction. It is no slight pleasure to a man to be preserved from the contagion of so corrupt an age, and to say to himself, whoever shall look into my soul will not find me guilty of any man's ruin or affliction, nor of revenge or envy, nor of the public violation of the laws, nor of innovation, nor disturbance, nor of the breach of a promise: and though the licentiousness of the age has not only tolerated, but taught it to every man; yet I have not seized the estate or purse of any French man whatsoever, but have lived only upon what is my own, both in war and in peace; nor have I set any man to work without paying him his hire. These are pleasing testimonies of a good conscience; and this natural gladness is a great benefit to us, and the only reward that never fails us.

The satisfaction that is connected with a good conscience.

\* This thought is taken from Seneca's Ep. 87, where he mentions it as a common saying of his countryman Attalus.



According to  
Montaigne, every  
man ought to sit  
in judgment up-  
on himself,

To found the recompence of virtuous actions on the approbation of others is laying it on a foundation too uncertain and embarrassed, especially in so corrupt and ignorant an age as the present, wherein the good opinion of the vulgar is a scandal. Upon whom do you rely for the discovery of what is commendable? God forbid that I should be an honest man according to the honourable definition which I daily see every one gives of it, *Quæ fuerunt vitia, mores sunt* \*. “The things that were formerly reckoned vices are the manners of the present age.” Certain friends of mine have at times reprimanded me very frankly of their own accord, or, at my instigation, thereby performing an office which, to a mind that is rightly formed, surpasses all the offices of friendship, not only in utility but in kindness. I have always received them with the most open arms of courtesy and gratitude. But to speak conscientiously, I have often discovered, both in their reproaches and their praises, so much false measure, that I had not done much amiss, rather to have acted wrong than right, according to their standard. We, especially who lead a private life, not exposed to any other view than our own, ought to have a tribunal established in our breasts, whereby to try our actions; and, according to that, sometimes to caress, and at other times to correct ourselves. I have my laws and my court of justice to judge myself by, and apply myself to those more than to any other rules. I do indeed restrain my actions by those of other men, but do not extend them by any other rule except my own. It is only known to yourself whether you are cowardly and cruel, or loyal and devout. Others see you not, and only form uncertain conjectures of you. They do not perceive your nature so plainly as your art; rely not therefore upon their verdict, but stick to your own: *Tua tibi judicio est utendum—Virtutis et vitiorum grave ipsius conscientie pondus est; quæ sublatae jacent omnia* †. “Make use of your judgment—conscience plainly shews the weight of virtues and vices;” take away that, all falls to the ground. But the saying, that repentance

\* Senec. Ep. 39, at the end. † Cic. de Natura Deorum, lib. iii. cap. 35.



follows close at the heels of sin, seems not to have regard to sin in its richest attire, which is lodged in us as in its own proper habitation. It is possible to disavow and retract the vices that surprise us, and towards which our passions hurry us; but those which by a long habit are rooted and anchored in a strong and vigorous will, are not liable to be gainfayed. Repentance is no other than a recanting of our will, and an opposition to our fancies, that follows us close which way soever we take. It makes another person disown his former virtue and continency.

\* *Quæ mens est hodie cur eadem non puero fuit?  
Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genæ †?*

Ah! whilst I was a vig'rous boy  
Why did I not this mind enjoy?  
Or why does not my rosy hue  
Return to paint my cheeks anew?

That is an exquisite life wherein a due regularity is maintained within doors. Every one may play a part in the puppet-show, and represent an honest man upon the stage; but within his own breast, where he may do what he list, and where nobody sees us; for a man to be regular there, that is the point. The next degree is for a man to be so at his own house in his ordinary actions, for which we are accountable to nobody, and wherein there is no study, no artifice; and therefore Bias, representing the excellent state of a family, says, the master of it was the same within doors, when by himself, as he was abroad, when governed by a regard to the laws, and the report of men ‖. And it was a worthy saying of ‡ Julius Drusus to the builders, when they

The excellency  
of a private life  
which is regular.

\* Horace here characterise Ligurinus, who repented when he came to be an old man that he had not made an ill use of his beauty while he had it. † Hor. lib. iv. ode 10. ver. 7, 8. ‖ Plutarch, in the Banquet of the wise Men, ch. 23. ‡ Or rather Marcus Livius Drusus, the famous tribune of the people, who died anno 662, at Rome, after having, by his ambition, fomented a dangerous war in Italy, of which Florus treats, lib. iii. cap. 17 and 18. As to what Montaigne says here of Livius Drusus, he took it from a treatise of Plutarch, intitled, Instructions to those who manage



they offered for 3000 crowns to raise his house so high that his neighbours should not overlook him so much as before,—I will give you, says he †, 6000 to make it so that it may be looked into on all sides. It is mentioned to the honour of Agesilaus, that when he travelled he used to take up his quarters in the temples, to the end that the people, and the Gods themselves, might be spectators of his private actions. Such a one has been the miracle of the world, in whom neither his wife nor servant have never seen any one thing remarkable\*. Few men have been admired by their dome-

No man a prophet in his own country.

stics. We find in history, that a prophet hath no honour, not only in his own family, but in his own country. It is the same in lesser things: and in this mean example the image of greater is to be seen. In my country of Gascoigne they look upon it as a drollery to see me in print. The farther off I am read from my own home the more I am esteemed. I am fain to purchase printers in Guenne, elsewhere they purchase me. Upon this foundation they go who conceal themselves living and present, to obtain a name when they are absent and dead. I had rather have less of it: and do not publish myself to the world for more than my share of it; when I leave it, I quit all farther claim. The people reconduct such a one by a public act with amazement to his very door. He puts off this pageantry with his robe, and falls so much the lower from it by how much the higher he was exalted. In his house there is nothing but tumult and disorder; and was there a regularity in it, it would require a quick and well tried judgment to perceive it in these low and private actions: to which may be added, that order is a dull melancholy virtue. To enter a

manage the Affairs of State, ch. 4. where this Drusus is called Julius Drusus, a tribune of the people. If Montaigne had consulted Paterculus on this article he might have perceived this small mistake of Plutarch.

† It is Plutarch that makes him speak thus; but, according to Paterculus, Drusus being about to build a house, and having an offer made him by the architect to contrive it after such a model that none of his neighbours might look into it, Drusus said, "if you know how, make me such a house rather that what I do in it may be seen by every body."

\* A man must be a hero indeed, said marshal Catinat, if his footman thinks it.



breach, to conduct an embassy, to govern a people, are actions of renown; to reprove, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and converse pleasantly and rationally with a man's own family, and with himself, not to relax nor to recant, are things more rare, more difficult, and less remarkable. By this means, they who lead a retired life do, whatever is said to the contrary, undergo offices of greater difficulty and extent than others. And private men, says Aristotle, serve virtue with more difficulty and eminence than they who are in the magistracy. We prepare ourselves for eminent occasions, more out of vanity than conscience. The shortest way to arrive at glory would be to do that for conscience which we do for glory. The virtue of Alexander appears to me with far less vigour in his theatre than that of Socrates in his mean and obscure employment. I can easily conceive Socrates in the place of Alexander, but Alexander in that of Socrates I cannot. Ask the one what he can do, he will answer, "conquer the world;" ask the other the same question, he will say, "conduct human life conformably to its natural condition;" a science much more general, weighty, and more lawful.

The soul is to be valued not for its high flight, but for its regularity. Its greatness is not exercised in grandeur but mediocrity. As they who judge and try us internally, make no great account of the lustre of our public actions, and see that they are only threads and rays of clear water springing from a slimy and muddy bottom; so likewise they who judge of us by this fine outward appearance make the same conclusion from our internal constitution, and cannot couple faculties that are common and like their own, with those other faculties that astonish them, and are so far out of their sight. Therefore it is that we give savage forms to dæmons; and who does not give Tamerlane large eye-brows, wide nostrils, a dreadful face, and a stature beyond measure, according to the conception he has formed from the report of his name? Had any one heretofore shewed me Erasmus, I would hardly have believed but that every thing he spoke to  
his



his man or his landlady was adage and apophthegm. We have a more suitable idea of an artificer upon his close-stool, or upon his wife, than of a great president venerable for his carriage and abilities. We fancy that they do not stoop so low from their high tribunals as to live. As vicious souls are often incited to do well by some strange impulse, so are virtuous souls to do ill. They are therefore to be judged by their settled state; when they are composed, if they ever are so; or at least when they are nearer to repose, and in their natural situation.

Natural inclinations fortified by education, but not changed and extirpated.

Natural inclinations are assisted and fortified by education, but are scarce ever altered or subdued by it. A thousand souls in my time have shifted towards virtue or vice in spite of a contrary discipline.

*Sic ubi desuetæ sylvis in carcere clausæ  
Mansuevere feræ, et vultus posuere minaces,  
Atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus  
Venit in ora cruor, redeunt rabiesque furorque,  
Admonitæque tament gustato sanguine fauces,  
Fervet, et a trepido vix abstinet ira magistro \*.*

So beasts of prey, imprison'd in a cage,  
Grow tame, abandoning their native rage  
And threat'ning looks, and do themselves inure  
The government of mankind to indure.  
But if again a little blood they taste,  
Their savage fury seizes them in haste;  
They thirst for more, grow fierce, and wildly stare,  
As if their trembling keepers they would tear.

Thus men palliate and conceal their original qualities, but do not extirpate them. The Latin tongue is as it were natural to me; I understand it better than the French, but I have not used to speak it, nor hardly to write it these forty years; and yet, upon some sudden agitations, which I have fallen into twice or thrice in my life (and once upon seeing my father, in perfect health, fall upon me in a fainting fit). I always vented my first outcries in Latin; nature starting and forcibly

\* Lucan. lib. iv. ver. 237.



expressing itself notwithstanding so long a discontinuance; and of this there are many other instances.

They who in my time have taken a review of the manners of the age do, by novel opinions, reform seeming vices; but as for real vices they leave them as they were, if they do not augment them; the latter of which, it is to be feared, is the case. We choose to disregard all other good actions on account of these external reformations of less cost and greater merit, and thereby make a cheap atonement for the other natural consubstantial and internal vices. Look back a little on our own experience. There is no man, if he be attentive, who does not find in himself a particular and governing method of his own, which struggles with instruction, and with the tempest of passions that are contrary to it. For my part, I seldom feel myself agitated by any shock. I find myself, as it were, always in my place like heavy unweildy bodies. If I am not at home I am always near it. My debauches do not carry me very far off. There is nothing strange nor extreme in the case, and yet I have healthy and vigorous raptures. The true condemnation, and that which affects men's common practice, is that their state of retirement is full of filth and corruption, the idea of their reformation blurred, their repentance weak, and as much to blame almost as their sin. Some either for having been linked to vice, by a natural propensity, or by a long habit, cannot see any deformity in it. Others (of which class I am) do indeed weigh vice, but they put pleasure, or some other motive, in the other ballance, and suffer and yield to it for a certain price, but viciously and basely; yet there might perhaps be imagined so vast a disproportion of measure, wherein with justice, the pleasure would excuse the sin, as we say of profit, not only if it were accidental, and out of sin, as larceny, but in the very exercise of sin as in the enjoyment of a woman, wherein the temptation is violent, and it is said, sometimes to be invincible. Being the other day in Armagnac, at a seat which belongs to a kinsman of mine, I saw a country fellow, ~~that was~~ by

The reformations of mankind only relate to externals.

The repentance of men commonly very corrupt.



by every one called the Robber, who gave this narrative of his life ; that being born a beggar, and finding that he would never be able to get enough by his labour to support himself against want, he resolved to turn robber ; and, being a strong man, had followed the trade all the time of his youth with safety ; for he gathered in his corn and wine from other men's lands, but at a great distance, and in such great loads, that it was not to be imagined how one man could carry off so much upon his shoulders in one night as he did ; and moreover, he was so careful not to do one man more damage than another, that every particular man's loss therefore was of the less importance. He is now grown old and rich for a man of his rank, thanks to the trade he drove, which he makes no scruple to confess to every body ; and to make his peace with God for his ill-got wealth, he says, that he is daily ready, by his bounty, to make satisfaction to the successors of those he robbed ; and if he does not to every one (which it is impossible for him to do at once) he will leave it in charge to his heirs to perform the rest proportionably to the wrong he has done to every one, which is what he himself only knows. By this account, whether true or false, this man looks upon robbery as a dishonest action, and he hates it, but not so much as poverty. He barely repents of it, but forasmuch as it was in this manner counterballanced and compensated, he repents not of it. This is not that habit which incorporates us with vice, and conforms our very understanding to it ; nor is it that impetuous wind, which, by its gusts, disturbs and blinds our faculties, and for the time hurries us, judgment and all, into the power of vice.

Montaigne's judgment was the common guide of his actions.

It is my way to do what I do thoroughly, and all of a-piece. I scarce make a motion clandestinely and by stealth from my reason, and that is not conducted in a manner by the consent of all my faculties without division, or without any inward struggles. My judgment has all the blame or all praise of it ; and the blame it once has, it has always ; for I have had, almost from my infancy, the same inclination, the same turn, and the



the same spirit : and as to universal opinions, I fixed myself from my childhood in the same place where I was to stick. There are some sins that are impetuous, prompt, and sudden ; let us set them aside ; but as for those other sins so oft repeated, deliberated, and contrived, whether constitutional sins, or sins of profession and vocation, I cannot conceive that they have so long been settled in the same resolution, without the constant concurrence of the will and understanding with the reason and conscience of the person who is guilty of them : and the repentance which he boasts to be inspired with on a sudden is very hard for me to imagine. I am not of the opinion of the Pythagorean sect, that men assume a new soul when they approach the images of the gods to receive their oracles, unless they mean that it must be foreign, new, and lent for the time, our own shewing so little sign of the purification and cleanness fit for that office.

They act quite contrary to the Stoical precepts, who indeed command us to correct the imperfections and vices which we know ourselves guilty of, but forbid us thereby to disturb the tranquility of our minds. These make us believe that they have great vexation and remorse within, but as for amendment and correction, or discontinuance, they give no sign of it ; yet there cannot be a cure till the evil be purged away. If repentance were to be put into one scale of the ballance it would out-weigh sin. I do not know of any quality so easy to counterfeit as devotion, if the life and manners do not conform to it. The essence of it is abstruse and occult, the appearances easy and pompous.

True repentance ought to be followed with real amendment.

As for my part, I may desire in the general to be what I am not ; I may condemn and be out of humour with my whole frame, and pray to God for an entire reformation, and to excuse my natural infirmity ; but this is what I ought not to call repentance methinks, no more than a disgust that I am not an angel, nor a Cato. My actions are regulated by, and conformable to what I am, and to my condition. I cannot do better ; and repentance does not properly concern things that are not in our power.

A man cannot repent of his universal form.

It



It is rather regret. I conceive an infinite number of natures, more sublime and regular than mine; yet I do not amend my faculties, forasmuch as neither my arm nor my mind will become a whit the more vigorous by conceiving another's to be so. If to imagine and wish a more noble way of acting than we have would produce a repentance in us, we would then repent of our most innocent operations, forasmuch as we well suppose that in a more excellent nature they would be conducted with greater perfection and dignity; and we would wish to do the same. When I consider my demeanor in my youth, and that of my old age, I find that I have in general behaved with regularity as far as I know. This is all that my resistance can avail. I do not flatter myself; in the like circumstances I would be always the same. It is not a spot, but rather an universal tincture, with which I am stained. I have no notion of a repentance that is superficial, moderate, or ceremonious. It must sting me throughout before I can give it that name, and it must pierce my heart as deeply and universally as God sees into me.

Why Montaigne did not repent of the management of his affairs.

In matters of trade many good opportunities have escaped me for want of management, and yet I made a right choice according as occurrences presented themselves. It is my method to chuse always the easiest and the surest course. I find that in my past deliberations I have, by my own rule, proceeded with discretion according to the state of the subject proposed to me, and would do the same, were it a thousand years hence, on the like occasions. I do not consider the thing as it is now, but what it was when I deliberated on it. The force of all counsel lies in the time. Opportunities and affairs incessantly fluctuate and change. I have, in my life, fallen into some gross and important errors, not for want of good judgment, but for want of good luck. There are, in our affairs, some secret circumstances not to be guessed at, particularly in human nature certain silent conditions that make no shew, and are unknown sometimes even to the possessor, which start and spring up from incidental causes. If my prudence could not



not penetrate into, or foretel them, I am not disgusted with it: it is confined to its own limits. If the event be against me, and favours that side which I have refused, there is no remedy; I do not blame myself for it: I accuse my luck, and not my performance. This is not what we call repentance.

Phocion had given certain advice to the Athenians, which was not followed; and the affair succeeding happily contrary to his opinion, somebody said, Well, Phocion, art thou pleased that this affair turns out so well? I am very glad, said he, that it has so happened; yet I do not repent that I advised otherwise ||. When my friends apply to me for my opinion, I give it freely and plainly, without considering, as almost all mankind do, that the thing being hazardous it may fall out contrary to my opinion, and then perhaps they may reproach me for my advice; but this is what I am very indifferent about; for they will be to blame for desiring that office which I could not justify myself to refuse them.

Counsel is independent of events.

I scarce ever lay any mistakes or misfortunes of mine to the charge of another person: the truth is, I seldom make use of another's advice, but only for the sake of civility and ceremony, unless it be where I have need of instruction in any science, or information of any fact. For in things where I have only my judgment to make use of, other men's reasons may be of some credit to support me, but of little force to dissuade me. I hear every thing favourably and decently; but I do not remember that to this hour I ever made use of any reason but my own. With me they are but flies or atoms that hover about my will. I lay no great stress upon my own opinions, and as little upon those of other men. Fortune rewards me justly. As I do not receive advice, I give as little. I am seldom asked for it, and more seldom trusted to; and know not of any undertaking, either public or private, that has been the

Montaigne seldom took another's advice in the management of his affairs, and seldom gave his to other persons.

|| Plutarch in his Notable sayings of ancient kings, princes, &c. under the article Phocion.



better for my advice ; even the persons, whom fortune had in any manner engaged to follow my direction, have chose more willingly to be guided by any other head-piece than mine : and as I am a man altogether as vigilant against the disturbance of my tranquillity as the diminution of my authority, I like it the better. By thus neglecting me, they humour me in what I profess, which is to settle and wholly contain myself within myself. It is a pleasure to me to be disinterested in other men's affairs, and not to be any way responsible for them.

Was little troubled for events that fell out contrary to his wishes; and why.

All affairs when they are over, happen as they will, give me little concern ; for the imagination, that so it ought to be, puts me out of my pain. They are rolled about in the great revolution of the universe, and linked in the chain of stoical causes. Your fancy cannot, by wish or imagination, move an iota, either past or to come, which the order of things will not totally overturn.

Made little account of the repentance owing purely to old age.

As to the rest, I hate that accidental repentance which old age brings with it. He of old times † who said he was obliged to his years for stripping him of pleasure, was of a different opinion from me. I can never think myself beholden to impotency for any good that it does me. *Nec tam aversa unquam videbitur ab opere suo providentia, ut debiliter inter optime inventa sit ;* “ nor can Providence ever be thought so averse to its own “ work that debility should be found among the best “ things.” Our appetites are rare in old age. A profound satiety comes upon us after the act. I discern nothing of conscience in this. It is chagrin and weakness that imprint on us a languid phlegmatic quality. We must not suffer ourselves to be wholly carried away by the alterations of nature so as to debase our judgment. Youth and pleasure did not heretofore so far blind me that I did not discern the

† This was Sophocles, who being asked if he still enjoyed the pleasures of love, made answer, *Dii meliora : libenter vero istinc, tanquam a domino agresti ac furioso profugi* ; “ the Gods have done better for me ; and glad I am that I have lived to escape from the wild and furious tyranny of love.” Cic. de Senectute, cap. 14.



face of vice in pleasure; nor does that disgust which years have now brought upon me, hinder me from discerning the face of pleasure in vice. Now that my days of pleasure are over, I judge of it as if they were not. I, who strictly and attentively ransack my reason, find it the very same it was in my most licentious age, if it be not perhaps a little weakened and impaired by being grown old; and I am of opinion, that as it does not permit me to embark in pleasure, for the sake of my bodily health, it would not give me more allowance now than heretofore for the sake of my soul's health. I do not reckon my reason the more vigorous because it has nothing to combat. My temptations are so shattered and mortified that they are not worth its opposition, for with only stretching out my hands I overcome them. Should my former concupiscence be replaced in its view, I fear it would not have so much strength to resist it as it had heretofore. I do not find that it has any other notion of pleasure now than it had then, nor that it has acquired any new light; wherefore if there be a recovery it is a scurvy one. Miserable kind of remedy where health is not to be obtained without a disease. It is not for our misfortune to perform this office, but for the good fortune of our judgment. I am not influenced by injuries and afflictions to do any thing but to curse them. This is for people who are not to be roused till they feel the scourge. My reason indeed acts with more freedom in prosperity, but is more distracted and harder put to it, to digest misfortunes than pleasures. I see best in a clear sky; health premonishes me with more alacrity and more benefit than sickness. I did all that I could to repair and regulate myself when I had health to enjoy them. I would be ashamed and vexed that the misery and misfortune of my old age should be preferred before my good, healthful, spiritely, and vigorous years; and that men should judge of me, not by what I have been, but by what I am now that I have as it were ceased to be.

In my opinion it is in happy living, and not in dying happily, as Antisthenes said, that human felicity consists. I have not aimed to make a monstrous addition

Wherein human felicity consists, according to Montaigne.



of a philosopher's tail to the head and body of a libertine, nor that this wretched remainder of life should contradict and give the lye to the pleasantest, soundest, and longest part of it. I would fain represent myself uniform throughout. Were I to lead my life over again, I would live just as I have done. I neither complain of the past, nor fear the future; and, if I do not deceive myself, I have been much the same within as without. I am principally obliged to my fortune, that the course of my bodily estate has been carried on in every thing in its season. I have seen it in its bud, blossoms, and fruit, and now see it withered; happily however because naturally. I bear the ailments I have the better as they are at their crisis, and also because they give me the more pleasing remembrance of the long felicity of my past life. My wisdom also may, perhaps, have been of the same pitch in both ages, but it was more active, and graceful, when young, spiritely, and natural, than now that it is broken, peevish, and painful. I therefore renounce those casual and dolorous reformatiōns. God must touch our hearts, and our consciences must amend of themselves by the aid of our reason, and not by the decay of our appetites.

What is the wisdom of old men.

Pleasure is in itself neither pale nor discoloured for being discerned by eyes that are dim and distempered. We ought to love temperance for its own sake, and in respect to God, who has commanded both that and chastity. What we derive from catarrhs, and what I am obliged for to my cholic, is neither chastity nor temperance. A man cannot boast that he despises and resists pleasure, if he does not see it, and if he does not know it, together with its charms, power, and most alluring beauty. I know both the one and the other, I have a right to say it: but it seems to me that in old age our minds are subject to more troublesome maladies and imperfections than they are in youth. I said the same when I was young, and when I was reproached with the want of a beard; and I say the same now that my grey hairs gain me authority. We call the crabbedness of our tempers, and the disrelish of present things, wisdom; but in truth we do not so much forefakē vices as change them, and in my opinion for worse.



worse. Besides a foolish groundless pride, nauseous babble, froward and unfociable humours, superstition, and a ridiculous thirst after riches, when the use of them is lost, I find in old age more envy, injustice, and malignity. It furrows the mind with more wrinkles than the face; and we never, or very rarely, see people who, in growing old, do not grow sour and musty. The whole man moves, both towards his perfection and his decay. In considering the wisdom of Socrates, and many circumstances of his || condemnation, I dare believe that he indulged himself by prevarication, in some measure, for the purpose, seeing that at 70 years of age he suffered such a rich genius as his was to be almost totally cramped, and his wonted brightness obscured. What metamorphoses do I every day see made by age in several of my acquaintance! It is a powerful malady, which creeps upon us naturally, and imperceptibly. Deep study and great precaution are absolutely necessary to avoid the imperfections it loads us with, or at least to slacken their progress. I find that, notwithstanding all my intrenchments, it steals upon me one foot after another; I bear up against it as well as I can, but I know not what it will bring me to at last; but, happen what will, I am content to have it known what I was before I fell.

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C H A P. III.

*Of three Commerces, i. e. Familiarities with Men, Women, and Books.*

**W**E must not rivet ourselves so fast to our humours and complexions. Our chief sufficiency is to know how to apply ourselves to various customs. For a man

The chief ability of the human understanding.

to

|| If this be a conjecture only founded on Montaigne's sagacity, it does him very great honour, for Xenophon tells us expressly, that in truth



to keep himself tied and bound, by necessity, to one only course, is but bare existence, not living. Those are the most amiable tempers, which are more variable and flexible. It was an honourable character of the elder Cato, *Huic versatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natam ad id unum diceret, quodcumque ageret* § ; “ he had  
 “ parts so flexible to every thing, that whatsoever he  
 “ took in hand, a man would be apt to say he was form-  
 “ ed by nature for that very thing only.” Were I to chuse for myself, there is no fashion so good that I would care to be so wedded to, as not to have it in my power to disengage myself from it. Life is a motion uneven, irregular, and various. A man is not his own friend, much less his own master, but rather a slave to himself, who is eternally pursuing his own humour, and such a bigot to his inclinations, that he is not able to turn aside from them. I speak it now at this time of life, when I find it hard to disengage myself from the uneasiness of my mind, by reason that it cannot amuse itself generally, but in things wherein it is embarrassed, nor employ itself because it is so cramped and inflexible. It is apt to magnify a slight subject, and stretches it to such a degree, as to require the application of all its strength. Its inactivity is therefore to me a painful labour, and prejudicial to my health. The minds of most men require foreign matter to quicken and exercise them ; mine has need of it rather to compose and settle it, *Vitia otii negotio discutienda sunt* † ; “ the vices owing to sloth are to be shaken  
 “ off by business ;” for my most painful, as well as principal study, is to study myself. Books are one sort of those employments that divert me from this study. Upon the first thoughts, which come into thy mind, it bustles and makes trial of its vigour in every respect ; exercises its feeling quality, sometimes towards force, at other times towards order and beauty, and then ranges,

truth Socrates defended himself with so much haughtiness before his judges, only from a consideration that at his age death would be better for him than life. This is the subject of the intire preface to that defence made by Socrates before his judges.

§ Tit. Liv. lib. xxxix, cap. 40.

† Senec. Ep. 59.

moderation,



moderates, and fortifies itself. It has in itself wherewith to rouse its faculties. Nature has given to it, as to all other men's, matter enough of its own for its benefit, and subjects proper enough both for its invention and judgment.

Meditation, for a man who can inspect and exert himself with vigour, is a powerful and copious study. I had rather frame my mind than furnish it. There is no employment, either more weak or more strong, than that of entertaining a man's thoughts according to the state of his mind. The greatest men make it their profession, *Quibus vivere est cogitare* †; "to whom to live and to think, are one and the same thing." Nature has also favoured man with this privilege, that there is nothing we can hold out in so long: nor any action to which we more commonly, and more readily incline. It is the business of the gods, says Aristotle, and that from which proceeds both their bliss and ours.

Meditation an important employment.

The principal use of reading to me is that, by the variety of subjects, it keeps my reason awake, and employs my judgment, not my memory. Few conversations therefore please me, if there be not life and power in them. It is true, that the gracefulness and elegance of a speech captivate and ingross my attention as much, or more than the importance or weight of the subject: and as I am apt to be sleepy in all other conversation, and give but little attention thereto, it often happens that in such poor, low discourse, and insipid chat, I either make drowsy, stupid, and ridiculous answers, unbecoming even a child, or else more indiscreetly and rudely maintain an obstinate silence. I am on the one hand of a pensive temper, which makes me absent from all but myself; and on the other hand have a stupid and childish ignorance of many common things. By these two qualities I have obtained that five or six as silly stories may as truly be reported of me as of any other person whatsoever.

Montaigne was inattentive to frivolous conversation.

† Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. v. cap. 38.



Too delicate in his conversation with the generality of mankind.

But to pursue my subject, this difficult temper of mine renders me very delicate of what company I keep, whom I am obliged to examine nicely, and am therefore unfit for common society. We live and trade with the commonalty. If their conversation be troublesome to us, if we disdain to apply ourselves to mean and vulgar souls (and such are often as regular as the most delicate, and all wisdom is insipid that does not accommodate itself to the stupidity of the vulgar) we must no longer intermeddle either with our own affairs, or those of other men; for those, both of a public and private nature, are dispatched with those people. The motions of the soul, that are the least forced and the most natural, are the most beautiful. Good God! what a vast service wisdom does to those whose desires it reduces within their power! There is no part of knowledge more profitable. "As much as lies in our power," was the favourite maxim and motto of Socrates. A phrase of great moment this; for we must adapt and divert our desires to things that are the nearest, and most easy to be acquired. Is it not a silly humour of mine to separate from a thousand, to whom fortune has joined me, and without whom I cannot live, and stick to one or two that are out of the sphere of my correspondence? Or rather is it not a fantastical desire of a thing which I can never recover? My gentle behaviour, an enemy to all bitterness and moroseness, may easily have secured me from envy and animosity; for never man gave more occasion, to be beloved I will not say, but not to be hated; yet the coldness of my conversation has justly deprived me of the good will of many, who are not to be blamed though they should put another and a worse construction upon it.

Montaigne passionately fond of exquisite friendships, but not qualified to cultivate common friendships.

I am very capable of acquiring, and maintaining friendships that are exquisite and uncommon; for as I am eager to close in with such acquaintance as suit my taste, I throw myself without reserve into their arms with such rapture that I can



can hardly fail to stick to them, and to make an impression where I fasten ; and this I have often found by happy experience. To common friendships I am in some measure cold and indifferent, for my course is not natural if it be not with a full sail ; besides my fortune having trained me from my youth, and tempted me to love one single and perfect friendship, it has indeed, in some measure, put me out of conceit with others ; and too much imprinted it on my fancy that, as one of the ancients said, such vulgar companions are the beasts of the company, though not of the herd. I have also a natural aversion to communicate myself by halves, and with that modification, servile and jealous prudence, which are prescribed to us in the case of numerous and imperfect friendships. And this is enjoined chiefly in the present age, when it is impossible to speak of mankind without danger or mistake.

Yet I plainly see, that he who has the conveniencies (I mean the essential conveniencies of life) for his end, as I have, ought to shun these difficulties and delicacies of humour as much as the plague. I would commend a mind of various qualities, which knows both to strain and slacken its vigour, that finds itself at ease in all stages of fortune, a man that can discourse with his neighbour about his building, hunting, or quarrel, and that takes pleasure in chatting with a carpenter, or a gardener. I envy those who can condescend to a familiarity with the meanest of their servants, and to hold a conversation with their train of followers : and I dislike the advice of Plato, that men should always speak in a magisterial strain to their servants, whether male or female, without being ever facetious or familiar\*. For besides what my reason tells me, it is both inhuman and unjust to set so great a value upon that same prerogative of fortune ; and those governments, wherein there is not so great a disparity admitted betwixt masters and their valets, seem to me the most equitable. Other men study

How useful it is to know how to treat all manner of persons with familiarity.

\* Magisterial language to servants censured, *De Legibus*, lib. vi. p. 871, edit. Francfort 1602.



how to to elevate and exalt their minds; I to render mine humble and lowly. It is only blameable in being too diffuse.

*Narras, et genus Æaci,  
Et pugnata sacro bella sub Illo :  
Quo Chium pretio cadum  
Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,  
Quo præbente domum, et quotâ  
Pelignis caream frigoribus, taces \*.*

Old Æacus you derive from Jove,  
And tell what kin he had above :  
You all the Trojan wars recite ;  
Who make baths, and who invite,  
But not what Chian wine will cost,  
Or yet a fire to warm in frost,

It is necessary to put ourselves on an equality with those we converse with.

Thus, as the valour of the Lacedæmonians stood in need of being moderated, and of the sweet and harmonious sound of flutes to mollify them in battle, lest they should be guilty of temerity and fury, whereas all other nations commonly make use of strong and shrill sounds and voices, which excite and inflame the soldiers' courage to the last degree ; so methinks that, contrary to the usual form, in the exercise of our minds we have more need of ballast than sail, of coldness and calmness than of heat and hurry. Above all things, it is my opinion, egregiously playing the fool, to make a parade of wit in the company of those who have none ; to talk always as it were in print, and to use a stiff quaint style ; or, on the other hand, *Favellar in punta di forcetta* ; "to affect a finical one like the ladies." You must let yourself down to the level of those you converse with, and sometimes too affect ignorance. You must lay aside strength and subtlety of argument : it is enough to preserve decency and order in common conversation ; and as for the rest, crawl upon the ground if they desire it. The learned are apt to stumble at this stone ; they al-

\* Horace, ode 19. lib. iii. ver. 2, &c.



ways make a parade of their superior talents, and scatter their books every where; so that in these days they have so pestered the closets and ears of the ladies with them, that if they have not retained the substance, they have at the least the shew of them, so that, let the subject of their discourse be what it will, they speak and write in a manner that is new and learned.

Whether women ought to be learned.

*Hoc sermone pavent; hoc iram, gaudia, curas,  
Hoc cunctata effundunt animi secreta, et quid ultra?  
Concumbunt dorkè †.*

In the same language they express their fears,  
Their anger and their joys, their griefs and cares,  
And vent the secrets of their souls; what more?  
In the same learned phrase they play the whore.

They quote Plato and St. Thomas in things for which the first person they meet would be as good authority. The learning that cannot penetrate their souls, hangs on their tongues. If those of quality will believe me, they would be content with their own natural treasures. They conceal and cover their own beauties under others that are foreign. It is a great weakness to put out their own light to shine by a borrowed lustre. They are interred and embalmed alive by art †, *De capsula totæ*, “being painted and perfumed from head to foot.” It is because they do not know themselves sufficiently. The world has nothing fairer than they are. This is their doing honour to the arts and painting, even paint itself. What need have they of any thing but to live beloved and honoured? For this they not only have, but know too much. They need only rouse a little, and give fresh

† Juv. Sat. vi. ver. 188.      † This is an expression of Seneca, which he applies to the petits maitres of his time, “Nosti complures juvenes barbâ et comâ nitidos de capsulâ totos.” epist. 95. He tells us elsewhere of one of these fops who, being carried by his slaves from the bath in a chair, thought fit to ask them, whether or no he was seated? as if it was a thing beneath his honour to know what he did himself without asking. Seneca de Brevit. Vitæ, cap. 12. I have not yet heard that any of our petits maitres have come up to this Roman fop.



warmth to their internal faculties. When I see them studying rhetoric, law, logic, and the like, which are so insignificant trifles, unnecessary for their occasions, I begin to fear that the men who advise them, do it that they may thereby have authority to be their masters. For what other excuse can I find for them. It is enough that they can, without our instruction, give the charms of their eyes an air that is brisk, stern, or languishing; that they can season a denial with severity, suspense, and favour, and that they are not at a loss for an interpreter of the speeches made for their service. With this knowledge they govern with a high hand, and rule both the regents and the scholars.

What branches  
of knowledge  
are fittest for the  
women.

If nevertheless they think much to give place to us in any thing whatsoever, and have a curiosity to be book-learned, poetry is an amusement proper for their occasions, it being a wanton, witty, dissembling, and prattling art, all pleasure and all shew like themselves. They will also reap many advantages from history. In moral philosophy they will be furnished with lessons that will enable them to judge of our humours and conditions, to defend themselves from our treacheries, to regulate the precipitancy of their own desires, to make good use of their liberty, to lengthen the pleasures of life, and mildly to bear the inconstancy of an humble servant, the roughness of a husband, and the disagreeableness of age, wrinkles, and the like. This is the utmost share that I would allow them in the sciences.

The good use of  
retirement.

There are some particular tempers that are retired and reclusive. I am naturally formed for communication and production. I am all open and undisguised, born for society and friendship. The solitude which I am fond of myself, and recommend to others, is chiefly with no other view than to withdraw my affections and thoughts into myself; to restrain and check not my proceedings, but my desires and cares, resigning all solicitude that is foreign, with a mortal aversion to servitude and obligation; and not so much to the company of men as to the mul-



multiplicity of business. To say the truth, local solitude rather expands and sets me at large. I the more willingly embark in affairs of state and the world when I am alone. At the Louvre, and in the crowd of the court, I keep within my own sphere: the throng makes me retire into myself, and I never entertain myself so wantonly, so licentiously, and so singularly, as in places of respect and ceremonious prudence. Our follies do not provoke me to laughter, but our wisdom. I am constitutionally no enemy to the bustle of court. I have spent part of my life there, and capable of behaving chearfully in great companies, provided it be now and then, and at my own time. But that effeminacy of judgment, of which I have been speaking, necessarily attaches me to solitude; nay at my own house, in the midst of a numerous family, and a house as much frequented as any, I see people enow, but seldom such as I am fond of conversing with. And I there reserve, both for myself and others, an unusual liberty. There is in my house no such thing as ceremony, attendance, conducting, and the like fatiguing rules of our courtesy. (O! servile and troublesome custom!) Every one there governs himself in his own way, let who will speak his thoughts; while I am mute in deep meditation, and shut up in my closet, without any offence to my guests.

The men, whose society and familiarity I covet, are those they call honest and ingenious men; and the idea of these puts me out of conceit with others. This, if rightly considered, is the rarest of our characters, and a character which is chiefly owing to nature. The end of this commerce is simply private friendship, frequent visits and conference, the correspondence of souls without other advantage. In our discourse, all subjects are alike to me. I care not whether there be weight or depth in it. There is still a grace and pertinence in it. The whole is tinged with a judgment mature and steady, and mixed with good nature, frankness, chearfulness, and friendship. It is not only in discoursing on the affairs of kings and states, that our understanding displays its beauty and force, but it shews it as much in  
private

Character of the men whose familiarity is worth seeking.



private confabulation. I know what my people mean, even by their silence and smiles, and discover them better perhaps at table than at the council. Hippomachus said justly, that he knew good wrestlers by only seeing them walk in the streets. If learning will please to bear a part in our conference, it will not be rejected; not the magisterial, imperious, and impertinent kind, as is generally used, but that which is subordinate and docile. All we intend by it is to pass away the time, for at the hour of being instructed and preached to, we will go seek it in its throne. May it condescend to favour us for this once if it please; for as useful and desirable as it is, I suppose that, though we might want it, we could well enough dispense with it, and do our business without it. A person of good breeding, and used to converse with mankind, will naturally be agreeable to every body. Art is nothing but the counter-part and register of what such souls produce.

Commerce with  
women.

The conversation of fine, well-bred women is also to me a sweet enjoyment. *Nam nos quoque oculos eruditos habemus* \* ; “for we also are versed in the art of ogling.” If the soul has not so much enjoyment in this as in the first, the bodily senses, which likewise have the greatest share of this, reduce it to a proportion near to the other, but in my opinion not quite. It is a commerce however, wherein a man had need be a little upon his guard, and especially those of a vigorous constitution, as mine is. In my youth I got a scald by it, and suffered all the torments which the poets say will happen to those who run into this commerce, without order and judgment. It is true this scourge taught me more wit.

*Quicumque Argoticâ de classe Capharea fugit,  
Semper ab Euboicis vela retorquet aquis* †.

The ship that would not on Caphareus run,  
Always is sure th' Eubœan streight to shun.

It is madness to fix a man's thought wholly upon it, and to engage in it with a furious and indiscreet affection;

\* Cicer. Paradox, v. cap. 2.

† Ovid Trist. lib. i. el. 1.

but



but on the other hand, to be concerned in it without true love, and without the attachment of the will, like the comedians, to play a part that is made common by time and custom, without contributing any thing of his own to it but words; it is indeed providing for his safety, but in as scandalous a manner as he that abandons his honour or his profit, or his pleasure, from fear of danger. For it is certain that from such a proceeding no fruit can be expected to satisfy an honest soul. A man cannot take real pleasure in the enjoyment of what he has not in good earnest desired; and this I say, though fortune should be so unjust as to favour their dissimulation, which often happens, because there is none of the sex, though as ugly as the devil, who does not think herself very amiable, who does not think herself preferable, either for her youth, her hair, or her gait (for with the ugly women it is universally the same as with those that are handsome); and the Brachman virgins, who have no other recommendation, but that of the common crier, who calls the people together, come forth into the square to expose their matrimonial parts, to try if these at least are not tempting enough to procure them husbands. Consequently there is not one who does not easily suffer herself to be engaged by the first vow that is made to serve her. Now, from this treachery so common in the men of this age, it must needs happen, as we have already seen by experience, that the women rally and reunite themselves on purpose to avoid us, or else form their ranks by the example we give them, play their part of the farce, and give way to this negotiation without passion, care, or love. *Neque affectui suo aut alieno obnoxia* \*; “neither slaves to their own passion, nor to that of another person;” believing, according to the persuasion of Lysias in Plato, that they may with the more advantage and convenience surrender themselves up to us, the less we love them. The result will be as it is in comedies, where the audience has as much or more pleasure than the actors. For my part, I have no more

It ought to be attended with sincerity.

\* Tacitus's Annal. lib. xiii. cap. 45. where the historian speaks only of the famous Poppea, the wife of Nero, the perfect model of coquetry.



notion of a Venus without a Cupid, than of a mother without a child. They are what mutually lend and owe their existence to one another. Therefore this cheat rebounds upon the person that commits it; to whom indeed it is of little or no expence, nor on the other hand does he get any thing by it of value. They who have made Venus a goddess, have taken notice that her chief beauty was incorporeal and spiritual; but the Venus whom these people court is not so much as human, nor even brutal, but so very gross and terrestrial, that the very beasts will not accept her. We see that imagination and desire often heats and stimulates them before the body does: we see in both the sexes, that in the herd, they make choice and trial of their affections, and that they have among themselves an acquaintance of old good will. Even those which old age has deprived of bodily strength, do yet tremble, neigh, and twitter for love. We see them before the fact, full of hope and heat; and when the body has played its part, still tickled with the sweet remembrance of it; and we see some animals that swell with pride after the performance, and being tired and satiated, do yet, by vociferation, express a triumphant joy. He that has nothing to do, but only to discharge his body of a natural necessity, need to find employment for another by such curious preparations. This is not food for a coarse hoggish appetite.

Montaigne's  
taste in his  
amours.

As one who does not desire to be thought better than I am, I shall now tell of the follies of my youth. I have seldom been addicted to mercenary and common embraces, not only for my health's sake (and yet with all my care I had two mischances tho' they were slight forerunners) but also from a contempt of what was vulgar and venal. I chose to heighten this pleasure with difficulty, by desire, and a certain kind of vanity: and I was of the emperor Tiberius's mind\*, who, in his amours, was as much smitten with modesty and an honourable extraction, as with any other quality; and of the taste of Flora, the courtesan†, who  
never

\* Tacit. Annal. lib. vi. cap. 1.

† After having turned over many books in search of Montaigne's authority for this story, I found in Bayle's Dictionary



never prostituted herself to less than a dictator, a consul, or a censor; and solaced herself in the dignity of her lovers. Certainly pearl and tiffue, titles and attendants, add something to the pleasure.

As for the rest, I had a great liking to wit, provided the body was not exceptionable. For, to confess the truth, if either of these two beauties must of necessity be wanting, I would prefer the personal before the rational. The latter is of use in better things; but in the subject of love, a subject in which the senses of seeing and feeling are chiefly concerned, something may be done without the charms of the mind, but without those of the body nothing. Beauty is the true advantage of the women, and so peculiarly theirs, that what we have, though it requires other features to render it such, is only in its best state when it is puerile and beardless, and common with theirs. It is said that those preferred to the service of the grand signior, on the score of their beauty, the number of whom is very great, are dismissed at 22 years of age at the farthest. Reason, prudence, and the offices of friendship, are more commonly found among the men; and therefore they govern the affairs of the world.

Personal beauties preferable in amours to those of the mind.

The two sorts of commerce, or conversation, which we have mentioned, viz. that with men by a free and familiar conversation, and that with women by love, are accidental, and dependent on another. The one does not occur so often as is to be wished; the other decays with age; so that they could never have been sufficient for the necessities of my life. That with books, which is the third, is much more sure, and more within our power. It yields to the former in the other advantages; but has constancy and readiness of service for its sole share. It accompanies,

Of reading, or the third sort of conversation.

Dictionary that it is Brantome, who in his lives, *Des Femmes Galantes*, tom. i. p. 313, &c. says that the courtesan Flora was of a good family and lineage; and that, whereas *Lais* was a common prostitute to all mankind, Flora only obliged the great, insomuch that she had this inscription over her door, "Ye Kings, Princes, Dictators, Consuls, Censors, Pontiffs, Questors, Ambassadors, and other great men, enter and welcome; but no others."



and is assisting to me wherever I go : it comforts me in old age and solitude ; it eases me of the weight of idle time and delivers me at any hour from disagreeable company ; and it blunts the edge of pain, if it be not extreme, and has not the entire possession of me. To divert my self from an uneasy thought, it is but to run to my books ; they presently drive it out of my mind, by turning its attention to them : and though they see that I only have recourse to them for want of other more real, natural, and lively benefits, they do not reflect on me for it, but always receive me with the same countenance. “ He “ may well go on foot,” they say, “ who leads his horse in “ his hand.” And our James, king of Naples and Sicily, who, while handsome, young, and healthy, caused himself to be carried up and down in a hand-barrow, upon a sorry mattrafs, dressed in a vest of grey cloth, and a cap of the same ; yet attended in great royal pomp with horse-litters, led horses of all sorts, gentlemen and officers ; put on an austerity that was effeminate and unsteady. The sick man is not to be pitied who has his cure in his pocket. In the experience and practice of this, which is a very true sentence, consists all the benefit which I receive from books ; and yet in fact I make as little use of them, in a manner, as they who know them not. I enjoy them as misers do their hoards, by knowing that I have them to use when I please. With this right of possession my mind is satisfied, and at rest. I never travel without my books, be it in time of war or of peace ; yet sometimes for several days or months, I do not look into them. I will read by and by, I say to myself, or to-morrow when I am in the humour. Mean while the time runs away without any inconvenience to me ; for it is impossible to say how tranquil and easy I am in this consideration, that I have them by me, to divert myself with them whenever I please ; and in the thought of what an assistance they are to me in life.—This is the best viaticum I have yet known for this mortal pilgrimage, and I extremely pity those men of understanding who are unprovided with it ; yet I rather accept of any other kind of amusement, be it ever so light, because this cannot fail me.



The situation of  
Montaigne's li-  
brary.

When I am at home I the oftener visit my library, from which I at once survey all the operations of my family. It is over the entrance into my house, from whence I have a view under me of my court-yards and garden, and of most of the offices of my house. There I turn over one book, then another, on various subjects, without order, and without design. One while I ruminate, another while I copy and dictate, as I walk to and fro, such whimsies as these in my *Essays*. It is in the third story of a tower, of which the first is my chapel, the second a chamber with its closets, where I often lie to be retired; above it is a great wardrobe. This was formerly the most useless part of my house. I there pass away the most of the days of my life, and most of the hours in the day, but am never there at night. At the end of it there is a very neat closet, with pleasant window-lights, and a fire-place. And was I not more afraid of the trouble than of the expence, the trouble, which drives me from all application to business, I could easily join to it on each side, and on the same floor, a gallery of 100 paces in length, and 12 in breadth; there being walls already raised, though for another design, to the height that is requisite. Every retired place should have a walk in it. For if I sit still my thoughts sleep. My fancy does not operate so well as when it is put in motion by that of my legs. They who study without a book are all in the same condition. The form of my study is round, and has no more level than what is taken up by my table and chair; so that I have a view of all my books in five rows of shelves, quite round me. It has three noble and free prospects, and is sixteen paces in diameter. I am not so constantly there in the winter, for my house is perched upon an eminence, as its name imports, and this part of it is most exposed to the wind, which pleases me the better, for not being so easy of access, and a little remote, as well for the benefit of exercise as for being more retired. It is there that I am in my kingdom, as we say; and there I endeavour to render myself sole monarch, and to sequester this corner from all society, conjugal, filial, and civil. Every where else I



have but a verbal authority, and of a confused essence. Miserable is that man, in my opinion, who has no place at home where to be by himself, to entertain himself alone, or to conceal himself from others. Ambition sufficiently plagues its proselytes by keeping them always in shew, like a statue in a market-place, *Magna servitus est magna fortuna* \* ; “ a great fortune is a great slavery :” those who possess it have scarce a retirement for the necessities of nature. I have thought nothing so severe, in the austerity of life which our friars affect, as what I see in some of their fraternities ; namely, to have a perpetual society of place by rule, and numerous assistants among them in every action whatever ; and I think it somewhat more tolerable to be always alone, than never to be so.

The Muses are the sport, and pastime of the mind.

If any one shall tell me, that it is undervaluing the Muses to make use of them only for mirth and pastime, I shall say he does not know the value of pleasure, play, and pastime, so well as I do ; I live from hand to mouth, and, with reverence be it spoken, I only live for myself ; in that all my designs terminate. I studied, when young, for the sake of ostentation, afterwards for wisdom, and now for my recreation, but never for gain. A vain and prodigal longing I had for this sort of furniture, to supply my own necessity, and to dress and adorn me ; But I have long since weaned myself of it.

The inconveniences attached to the pleasure which books give.

Books have many charming qualities to such as know how to chuse them ; but there is no good without its evil. This is a pleasure, not more pure and untainted than others ; it has its inconveniences, and great ones too. The soul is exercised in it, but the body, the care of which I ought not to forget, remains in the mean time without action, grows heavy and stupid. I know of no excess more prejudicial to me, or more to be avoided in this my declining age. Thus have I given you my three favourite, and particular occupations. I speak not of the duties I owe to mankind by civil obligation.

\* Senec. Consolatio ad Polybium, cap. 26.



## C H A P. IV.

*Of Diversion.*

**I** Was once employed to console a lady, who was truly afflicted; for most of their mournings are affected and ceremonious.

*Uberibus semper lachrymis, semperque paratis,  
In statione sua, atque expectantibus illam,  
Quo jubeat manare modo\*.*

They always have a dam for present use,  
Ready prepar'd whene'er they draw the sluice,  
On least pretence of joys, or griefs, or fears,  
To fally out in false dissembling tears.

It is going the wrong way to work to oppose this passion, for opposition only provokes it, and makes them more sorrowful. The evil is exasperated by the warmth of argument. We see in common discourse, that what slips unguardedly from a man, if another goes to controvert it, the former takes it in dudgeon, and justifies what he had said; especially if it be a matter wherein he is interested. Besides, in so doing, you enter upon your work in a rough manner; whereas the first visits of a physician, to his patient, ought to be gentle, gay, and pleasant. Never did an ill-looking swollen physician do any thing to purpose. On the contrary therefore a man must, in order to make his way, soothe the patient's complaints, and express some approbation and excuse for them. By this discretion you gain credit to proceed farther; and, by an easy and insensible gradation, you fall into a reasoning that is more solid and proper for their cure. I, whose chief aim it was to deceive those bystanders who had their eyes fixed upon me, thought fit to palliate the disease; though indeed I find, by experience, that I have an awkward and unlucky hand

The usefulness  
of administering  
diversion by  
may of comfort



at persuasion. My arguments are either too poignant, too dry, or too blunt and lifeless. After I had for a while applied myself to her grievance, I did not attempt to cure it by strong and lively arguments, either because I had them not to use, or because I thought to gain my point better another way; neither did I set about the choice of the various methods of consolation prescribed by philosophy; as that what we complain of is no evil, according to Cleanthes †; that it is a slight evil, as the Peripatetics say; that to complain thus is neither just nor laudable, according to Chrysippus; nor the method prescribed by Epicurus, more suitable to my taste, viz. shifting the thought from things that are afflicting to those that are pleasant; nor like Cicero, to make a collection of all these together, in order to dispense them occasionally. But, by softly weakening the force of my arguments, and turning them by degrees sometimes to subjects nearer to the present case, and at other times to those that were a little more remote; as she attended to me, I insensibly deprived her of her sorrow, and kept her calm and quite composed as long as I was with her. I diverted the complaint; but they who succeeded me in the same service found no amendment in her, for I had not gone to the root.

The method of diverting the enemy, employed successfully in war and in negotiations.

Perhaps I may have glanced elsewhere on some kind of public diversions: and the practice of military diversions, which Pericles made use of in the Peloponnesian war, and of a thousand more such in other places, for drawing off the enemy's forces from a country, is too frequent in history. It was an ingenious stratagem by which the Sieur de Himbercourt ‡ saved both himself and others, in the city of Liege, when the duke of Burgundy, who besieged it, made him enter into it to execute the articles that were agreed to for the surrender. The towns-people, who assembled in the night for that purpose, began to mutiny against the agreement, and many of them resolved to

† Cicer. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iii. cap. 31.  
 ‡ You will find this story at full length in the Memoirs of Philip de Comines, lib. ii. cap. 3.



fall foul upon the negociators of it, whom they had in their power. He feeling the gust of this first storm of the people, who were about rushing into his quarters to kill him suddenly, sent out two of the inhabitants of the city (for he had some of them then present with him) to make an offer to the town-council of fresh, and more favourable terms, which he had framed on the spot for the present occasion. These two men diverted the first storm, by the repair of the enraged rabble to the town-house, to hear and consider of the subject of their commission. The deliberation was short, and so a second storm arose with as much fury as the other; whereupon he dispatched four fresh mediators, of the same quality, protesting that they had now better conditions to offer to them, and such as would give them entire content and satisfaction; by which means the people were again repressed. In short, by thus diverting their fury with such a contrivance of amusements, as made them spend it in vain consultations, by which it was at last laid asleep, he spun out the affair to another day, which was the principal thing he wanted.

This other story is also of the same stamp. Atalanta, a virgin of extraordinary beauty, in order to disengage herself from a thousand, or more suitors, who courted her in marriage, proposed this condition to them, that she would accept of him for a husband that should equal her in running, provided † that they who came short of her should be put to death. There were enow who thought the prize very well worth such a risque, and who suffered the penalty of this cruel bargain. Hippomanes, being to take trial after the others, invoked the tutelar goddess of his amorous passion, and implored her assistance, who, hearing his petition, furnished him with three golden apples, and an instruction how to use them. The field on which they ran being quite open, as soon as Hippomanes perceived his mistress close at his

How Atalanta was diverted, and thereby defeated in a race.

† "Præmia veloci conjux thalamique dabuntur :

"Mors pretium tardis : ea lex certaminis esto."

Ovid, Met. lib. x. fab. 11. ver. 12. 13.



heels, he, as if by inadvertency, let fall one of the apples, the beauty of which was so tempting to the virgin, that she failed not to turn out of the way to take it up.

*Obstupuit virgo, nitidique cupidine pomi  
Declinat cursus, aurumque volubile tollit \*.*

The nimble virgin, dazzled to behold  
The shining apple rolling on the mold,  
Stopp'd her career to seize the tempting gold.

He did the same, when he saw himself hard pressed, by the second and third apples, till, by thus diverting her, and making her go often out of her way, he won the race.

The diversion of the mind to other objects a useful method for the cure of its disorders.

When physicians cannot purge off a catarrh, they divert and turn it to some other less dangerous part. And I find also that this is the most ordinary practice for diseases of the mind. The mind, says Cicero, is sometimes to be drawn off to other thoughts, pursuits, cares, and occupations, and must often be cured, like sick persons, by the change of place †. It gives a little jostle to a man's disorders; it neither makes him sustain, nor diminish their attack, and only makes him decline and turn out of the way from it.

It belongs only to a Socrates to be familiar with death.

This other lesson is too sublime and too difficult. It is for men of the first class to pause upon, consider, and judge of it. It belongs only to a Socrates, not to change countenance when he looks at death, but to grow familiar, and to sport with it. He seeks for no comfort but what he expects from that. To die appears to him a natural and indifferent accident. It is thereon that he fixes his sight and resolution, without looking elsewhere.

What induced the disciples of Hegesias to deprive themselves of life.

The disciples of Hegesias, who actually starved themselves to death, and were animated to it by the fine language of his instructions, which was so powerful that king Ptolemy forbade him to entertain

\* Ovid, *Métam.* id. *ibid.* ver. 107, &c.

† Cic. *Tusc. Quæst.* lib. iv. cap. 35.



his followers any more with such homicide doctrines\*; those disciples, I say, do not consider death in itself, nor do they judge of it. It is not on that they fix their thoughts; they run towards, and aim at a new being.

Those poor wretches that we see brought upon a scaffold, full of ardent devotion; and therein employing all their senses as far as possible, their ears to the instructions given them, their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, and their voices employed in loud prayers, with a vehement and continual emotion, do things doubtless which are laudable and proper for such a necessity. We ought to commend them for their devotion, but not properly for their constancy. They shun the encounter, they turn death out of their thoughts, and amuse themselves with some trifle or other, as children are amused when a surgeon goes to prick them with the lancet. I have seen some who, when they have happened to look down upon those dreadful instruments of death that are near them, have fainted, and furiously turned their thoughts another way. Those who are to be cast from a frightful precipice, are advised either to shut their eyes, or turn them to another side.

Whether it is owing to a firmness of soul that those who are going to die on a scaffold give way to violent fits of devotion.

Subrius Flavius, the general, being, by Nero's command, to be put to death, and by the hands of Niger, another general, when they led him to the place of execution, Flavius perceiving the hollow that Niger had caused to be made for his neck, to be badly contrived, said to the soldiers, who were present, "neither is this according to military discipline." When Niger exhorted him to keep his head steady, "do you but strike," said he, "as steadily †." And he was right in his guess, for Niger's arm trembled, so that he made several strokes at his neck before he cut off his head. This man indeed seems to have had his thoughts steadily fixed on the subject.

The constancy of Subrius Flavius, just as he was going to be executed.

\* Valer. Max. lib. viii. cap. 9. Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 34.

† Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. cap. 67.



Whether men  
think much of  
death in a battle  
or a duel.

He that dies in a battle, sword in hand, neither thinks, apprehends, nor considers of death, being diverted from the idea of it by the heat of the battle. An honest man of my acquaintance falling down by a thrust in a combat, and receiving nine or ten stabs from his adversary as he lay stretched on the ground, every one present called out to him to examine his conscience; but he told me afterwards, that though he heard what they said, it nothing moved him, and that he thought of nothing but how to disengage himself, and be revenged. He killed his man in that same rencounter. He who brought L. Syllanus \*, the sentence of his death, did him very great service, forasmuch as that having heard his answer †, “that he was well prepared to die, but not by the hand of an executioner,” he rushed upon him with his soldiers, when he, being quite unarmed, defended himself obstinately with his fists and feet, till he received so many wounds that he was killed, after having, by this sudden frenzy, dissipated the painful apprehension of the lingering death for which he was designed.

The different  
considerations  
which hinder us  
from thinking  
directly of death.

We always think of something else; either the expectation of a better life lays hold of us, and supports us, or the hopes of the valour of our children, or of the honour that will be hereafter done to our names, or the escape from the evils of this world, or the vengeance that threatens those who are the authors of our death. Poor Dido says,

*Spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,  
Supplicia hausurum scopulis, et nomine Dido  
Sæpe vocaturum.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Audiam: et hæc manes veniet mihi fama sub imos ||.*

Sure, if the gods have any pow'r at all,  
Split on the rocks, thou wilt on Dido call;  
But all in vain: thy shipwreck I shall know  
By fame convey'd me to the shades below.

\* Tacitus calls him Lucius Silanus, Annal. lib. xvi. cap. 7. † Tacit. Annal. lib. xvi. cap. 9. || Virgil, Æneid. lib. iv. ver. 382, &c.



Xenophon was sacrificing, with a crown upon his head, when news was brought to him of the death of his son Cryllus, slain at the battle of Mantinea \*. At the first intelligence of it he took off his crown, and threw it on the ground; but hearing, in the sequel of the narrative, how valiantly he fell, he took it up, and replaced it on his head. Epicurus himself, at his death is comforted by the consideration of the utility and eternity of his writings. *Omnes clari et nobilitati labores, fiunt tolerabiles* †; “all works that are illustrious and renowned, are to be borne with.” And the same wound, the same fatigue are not equally intolerable, as Xenophon says, to a general of an army and a common soldier. Epaminondas died with much more chearfulness when he was informed that victory had declared for him. *Hæc sunt solatia, hæc fomenta summorum dolorum* ‡; “these are the lenitives; these the fomentations of the greatest sorrows.” Other circumstances of the like kind amuse and entertain us, and turn off our consideration of the thing in itself. Even the arguments of philosophy are always edging and glancing on the subject, without scarce touching the exterior part. The greatest man of the chief school of philosophy, which superintended the others, I mean the great Zeno, forms these syllogisms with respect to death and drunkenness. *Nullum malum gloriosum est; mors autem gloriosa est; mors ergo non est malum* §; “no evil is honourable; but death is honourable; therefore death is not an evil.” Nobody trusts a drunken man with a secret, but any one will trust a wise man; therefore no wise man is a drunkard. Is this hitting the mark? I am pleased to see that these first rate geniuses cannot divest themselves of their fellowship with us. With all their pretended perfections, they are still but stupid mortals.

Revenge is a sweet passion, and strongly imprinted in nature. I see it plainly, though I have no experience of it. To divert a young prince from it lately, I

The way to dissipate a violent longing for revenge.

\* Valer. Max. lib. v. § 10.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 25.

‡ Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 24.

§ Senec. epist. 82, 83.



did not offer to say, that, to the man who had smote him on one cheek, he should turn the other also, in obedience to charity; nor did I endeavour to set before him the tragical events which poetry ascribes to this passion. I did not meddle with his passion, but tried, for a fancy, to give him a relish of the beauty of a contrary quality; and, by representing the honour, favour, and good will, which he would acquire by good nature, I gave his mind a turn to ambition. Thus I carried my point.

The usefulness  
of making such a  
diversion in the  
passion of love.

If your affection in the article of love be too strong, disperse it, say they; and they are perfectly right, for I myself have often tried it with advantage. Break it into desires of various kinds, of which, if you please, there may be one regent and paramount; but lest it should tyrannize and domineer over you, weaken, and give it some pause, by dividing and diverting it.

*Cum morosa vago singultiet inguine vena \*.*

*Conjicio humorem collectum in corpora quæque †.*

When one amour engrosses all thy mind  
Discharge thy loins on all the leaky kind:  
For that's a wiser way than to restrain  
Within thy swelling nerves, that hoard of pain.

And look to it in time, lest it prove too troublesome to deal with when it has once got possession of you.

*Si non prima novis conturbes vulnera plagis,  
Volvivagaque vagus venere ante recentia cures.*

Unless you fancy ev'ry one you view,  
Ramble in love, and cure old wounds by new.

It is possible to  
be disengaged  
from one passion  
by the means of  
another.

I was once disturbed by a strong passion, according to my natural temper, though not so vehement as just; and perhaps had been undone by it if I had merely trusted to my own strength. Having need of a

\* Persl. sat. vi. ver. 73.

† Lucret. lib. iv. ver. 1063, &c.



powerful diversion to draw me out of it, I grew amorous by art and by study, wherein I was assisted by my youth. Love relieved me and rescued me from the evil, which was brought upon me by friendship. It is the same in every other case. If a violent imagination possesses me, I think it the shorter way to change than to conquer it, I depute one at least different from it, if not contrary to it. Variation always relieves, dissolves, and dissipates. If I cannot encounter with it, I escape from it, and, in avoiding it, I slip out of the way, and use craft. By shifting of places, business, and company, I hide myself in the crowd of other amusements and sentiments, where it loses the trace of me, and wanders out of my way.

In this manner nature proceeds, by the aid of inconstancy; for the time she has given us for the sovereign cure of our passions, gains its effect chiefly by reason that supplying our imagination with a superfoetation of objects, it loosens and dissolves the first apprehension how strong soever. A wise man visits his dying friend almost as much at the end of twenty-five years as in the first year; and, according to Epicurus, altogether as much, for he did not think the foresight of troubles, or their duration, an alleviation of them. But so many other thoughts run across this that it languishes, and is at length wearied out.

How time cures us of our passions.

Alcibiades\*, in order to take off the fondness of the people for common reports, cut off the ears and tail of his beautiful dog, and turned him out of doors, on purpose to give them a subject for discourse, instead of prating of his other actions. For this same purpose of misleading the opinions, conjectures, and conversation of the people, I have also seen some women conceal their real affections by such as were counterfeit. Nay, I have seen one who has counterfeited so long that she has in good earnest dropped the real and original love, and been

The way to dissipate common reports.

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Alcibiades, says, this dog cost him 700 crowns, and that his tail was his greatest beauty.



captivated by the feigned one : and by her I found that they who know their affections well placed, are fools to consent to such a disguise. The public reception, and entertainments being reserved for such pretended humble servants, a man may conclude him to be no conjurer if he does not in the end put himself into your place, and send you to his. This is properly to cut out, and make a shoe for another to wear.

A small matter either engages, or disengages the mind. A little thing disengages and puts us aside ; for a small matter engage us. We do not consider subjects, in the gross, and single in themselves : we are smitten with minute and superficial circumstances, or images, and with the insignificant parings of subjects.

*Folliculos ut nunc teretes æstate cicadæ  
Linquunt ||.*

Such as the hollow husks or bags we find  
That butterflies in summer leave behind.

Plutarch himself † laments his daughter for the monkey-tricks she played in her infancy. The remembrance of a farewell, a particular action or favour, or of a final recommendation, afflict us. The sight of Cæsar's robe troubled all Rome, which was more than his death had done. The very sound of names ringing in our ears, as, " My poor master ; my very good friend ; alas ! my dear father ; or my sweet daughter," affects us. When those repetitions torment me, and I examine them closely, I find it is no other than a grammatical complaint. The word and tone affect me, as the exclamations of preachers often work more upon their auditories than their arguments, and as we are moved at the pitiful cries of a beast that is killed for our service, without my weighing or penetrating, in the mean while, into the true and solid essence of my subject.

— *bis se stimulis dolor ipse laceffit. ‡.*

With these incitements grief itself provokes.

These are the grounds of our mourning.

|| Lucret. lib. v. ver. 802, &c.

† In a treatise, intitled, A Word of Comfort to his Wife, on the Death of her Daughter, chap. 1.

‡ Lucan. lib. ii. ver. 42.



The obstinate continuance of the stone, especially those in my bladder, has sometimes been attended with so long a suppression of urine, even for three or four days together, and brought me so near death, that it would have been a folly to have hoped to escape it, or even so much as to have desired to escape it, considering what I suffer from it cruel attacks. What a monster of cruelty was that emperor, who, among other tortures, which he invented for his criminals\*, suffered them to drink as much wine as they could swallow, and then caused their privy members to be tied up so hard that their urine might stop and kill them. Finding myself in that state. I considered by what trifling causes and objects imagination fed my desire of life, of what atoms the weight and difficulty of parting with it was composed in my soul, and to how many frivolous thoughts we give way in so great an affair. A dog, a horse, a book, a glass, and what not, were reckoned in my loss: and others with no less folly, in my opinion, reckoned up in theirs their ambitious hopes, their money, and their science. I look upon death with indifference when I consider it as the end of life universally. I insult over it in the gross, but, when it comes to particulars, it harrows my soul. The tears of a footman, the disposal of my old cloaths, the touch of a friendly hand, a common consolation, discourage me, and sink my spirits. Thus are our souls troubled by the complaints in romance: and the regrets of Dido and Ariadne in Virgil and Catullus, raise a compassion even in those who do not believe them. It is a proof of an obstinate hard heart, never to perceive it moved; as they tell a wonderful story of Polemon, who is said to have not so much as turned pale at the bite of a mad dog, though it tore away the calf of his leg†. Nor is it within the extent of human wisdom, to have so lively and entire a conception of the cause of sorrow, by judgment, as not to be increased by his presence, when the eyes and ears

By what trifling objects the desire of life is kept up.

The privities of criminals tied up to stop their urine.

\* Suetonius, in the Life of Tiberius, chap. 62.

† In his Life by Diogenes Laertius, lib. iv. § 17.



are witnesses of it, the parts which are only to be agitated by trifling accidents.

The orator and the comedian touched to the quick by acting their parts though in fiction.

Is it reason that even the arts themselves should make an advantage of our natural stupidity and weakness? An orator, during the farce of his pleading, shall be moved by the sound of his own voice, and his feigned agitations, and suffer himself to be captivated by the passion which he represents. He will imprint on himself a true and real grief, by means of the part he plays, for the sake of transferring it to the audience, who are yet less affected than himself; like those persons who are hired at funerals, to assist in the ceremony of mourning, who sell their tears, and their sadness by weight and measure. For though they act in a borrowed shape, yet, by adjusting and habituating their countenance to the occasion, it is certain that they are often entirely swallowed up by it, and immersed in real melancholy. I was one among many other of his friends, who attended the corpse of M. de Grammont to Soissons, from the siege of La Fere, where he was killed. I observed that in all the places through which we passed, we set the people a weeping and lamenting by only the solemn parade of our convoy, for the name of the deceased was not so much as known by them. Quintilian\* says, he had seen comedians so deeply engaged in a mourning scene that they could not help weeping when they went off of the stage; and that, having himself undertaken to stir up a passion in another person, he espoused it himself to such a degree that he not only shed tears, but waxed pale, and behaved like a man truly overwhelmed with grief†.

A pleasant method of diverting one's grief.

In a country, near our mountains, the women act both the priest and the clerk; for as they magnify the loss of the deceased husband by the remembrance of what good and agreeable qualities he had, they, at the very same time, make a collection and proclamation of his imperfections, as if they would make themselves some amends, and so divert their compassion to contempt; and yet, with a much

\* Instit. Orat. lib. vi. cap. 2. at the end.

† Ibid.



better grace than we do, who, at the loss of a prime acquaintance, strive to give him new and false praise, and to make him quite another man, when we have lost sight of him than he appeared to be when we saw him, as if regret was a matter of instruction, or that tears, by washing our understanding, cleared it. For my part, I henceforth quit claim to all favourable characters the world shall be disposed to give of me; not because I shall be worthy of them, but because I shall be dead.

If any one asks another, what concern have you in this siege? "The interest of  
" example, he will say, and of the com-  
" mon obedience due to my prince; I  
" aim at no profit from it whatsoever;  
" and for honour, I know what a small  
" share of it can redound to such a private man as I  
" am: I have in this neither passion nor quarrel." See

Vain objects of mere imaginations, without reality, strike and determine the human mind.

him however but the next day, and you will find him quite another man, chafing, and red-hot with rage, in his line of the battle, for the assault. It is the glittering of so much steel, the fire and noise of our cannon and drums that has infused this fresh rancor and hatred into his veins.

A frivolous cause you will say: how is it a cause? There needs none to put the mind in agitation. A mere whim, without body and without subject, governs and puts it in motion. Let me think of building castles in Spain, my imagination suggests to me conveniencies and pleasures, with which my soul is really pleased and delighted. How often do we torment our minds with anger or sorrow by such shadows, and plunge ourselves in fantastic passions, which alter us both body and soul? What astonished, fleeing, and confused grimaces, do such idle notions excite in our countenances? What sallies and agitations do they create, both of the members and the voice? Does it not seem that this individual man has false notions from a crowd of others, with whom he has dealings, or some devil within him that persecutes him? Inquire of yourself where is the object of this change? Is there any thing in nature, man excepted, which nothing sustains, over which no-



thing has any power? \* Cambyfes, for only having dreamt in his fleep that his brother was to be one day king of Perfia, put him to death, though he was a brother that he loved, and always confided in †. Aristodemus, king of the Meffenians, killed himfelf, out of a fancy that a certain howling of his dogs was an ill omen ‖. And king Midas did the fame, becaufe he had dreamt fome difagreeable dream ‡. It is taking life at its juft value to abandon it for a dream. Hear nevertheless how the foul triumphs over the wretchednefs and weaknefs of the body, and its being liable to all injuries and alterations : and truly it has reason to fpeak thus of it.

*O prima infelix fingenti terra Prometheo!*

*Ille parùm cauti pectoris egit opus.*

*Corpora disponens, mentem non vidit in arte*

*Recta animi præmum debuit eſſe via §.*

Oh ! 'twas for man a moſt unhappy day  
When raſh Prometheus formed him out of clay !  
In his attempt, the heedleſs architect  
Did indifcreetly the main thing neglect.  
In framing bodies he had not the art  
To form the mind, the firſt and nobleſt part.

## CHAP. V.

### *On ſome Verſes of Virgil.*

**U**SEFUL meditation is the more embarrassing and burdensome by being copious and ſolid. Vice, death, poverty,

Gay reflections  
neceſſary in old  
age.

\* The Engliſh tranſlator, (Mr. Cotton) for want of having ſeen Angelier's edition of Montaigne in 4to, anno 1588, has miſtaken the ſenſe of this paſſage, by wording it thus, " Is there any thing but uſ in nature, but ſubſiſting nullity, over which it has power ? " A phraſe unintelligible, and only quoted leſt many of his readers ſhould be led into the ſame miſtake. † Herodot. lib. iii. p. 196. ‖ Plutarch's Treatiſe of Superſtition, chap. 9. ‡ Id ibid. § Propert lib. iii. pl. 5 ver. 7.



and distempers, are subjects that are both grave and grievous. It is necessary for the mind to be well furnished with the means of sustaining and combating evils, and instructed in the rules of a good life, and a right belief; and it should be often roused and exercised in this noble study. But, in an ordinary soul, this must be by relaxing sometimes, and with moderation; for, if continually bent to it, it will grow stupid. In my youth I found it necessary to put myself in mind, and to solicit myself to keep to my duty. Gaiety and health, they say, do not agree quite so well with these serious and wise discourses. I am at this present time in another state. The terms of old age only give me too much warnings, preach to me, and make me grow wiser. From an excessive sprightliness, I am sunk into excessive gravity, which is worse. For that reason I now suffer my fancy to run wild for the purpose, and sometimes employ my mind in wanton and juvenile thoughts, with which it diverts itself. I am of late but too reserved, too grave, and too sedate. Every day, at these years, admonishes me to be cool and temperate. This body of mine avoids irregularity, and dreads it. It is now its turn to guide my mind towards a reformation. This too governs in its turn, and more roughly and imperiously than the other. It does not let me rest an hour, either sleeping or waking, from some instruction concerning death, patience, and repentance. I now deny myself temperance, as I did formerly pleasure; for it draws me too far back, and even to a degree of stupidity. Now I would fain be my own master in every respect. Even wisdom has its excess, and has as much need of moderation as folly; therefore lest I should wither, dry up, and over-burden myself with prudence, in the intervals, which my infirmities allow me,

*Mens intenta suis ne fiet usque matis †.*

Lest that my mind should evermore be bent,  
And fix'd on subjects full of discontent.

† Ovid de Trist. lib. iv. eleg. 1. ver. 4.



I gently decline it, and turn away my eyes from the stormy and cloudy sky that I have before me; which, thanks be to God, I consider without fear, but not without meditation and debate; and amuse myself with the remembrance of the days of my youth,

—animus quod perdidit, optat,  
Atque in præteritâ se totus imagine versat †.

The mind longs to regain what it has lost,  
And by things past is totally ingross'd.

Was it not the meaning of Janus's double face, to signify that childhood should look forward, and old age backward? Let years drag me on as they may, but it shall be backward. As long as my eyes are able to review that beautiful season, which is expired, I now and then turn them that way. Though it is gone out of my blood-vessels, yet I am not willing to root the image of it out of my memory.

—————hoc est,  
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui ‥.

The man lives twice, who can the gift retain  
Of mem'ry, to enjoy past life again.

Old men should be present at the pastimes and exercises of the youth.

Plato prescribes to old men to be present at the exercises, dancings, and sports of youth, that they may be pleased to see in others that activity and beauty of the body, which in themselves is no more; and that they may recal to mind the gracefulness and bloom of that flourishing stage of life: and he requires that, in those recreations, they ascribe the honour of the victory to the young man who has given the best, and the most diversion and joy to the company. I used formerly to mark dull gloomy days as extraordinary; those are now my ordinary ones, and the extraordinary are the serene, bright days. I am

† Petronius, p. 90. of the Paris edition, 1587.

‥ Martial lib. x. epig. 23, ver. 7.



ready to leap out of my skin for joy, as much as if I had received a new favour when I had not a right to one. With whatever vain fancies I please myself, I cannot sometimes force one poor smile from this wretched body of mine. I am only merry in conceit, and, as in a dream, to divert by stratagem the chagrin of old age : but surely it would require another remedy than a dream. A weak struggle of art against nature. It is a great folly to lengthen and anticipate human inconveniencies, as every body does. I had rather be old, though it be for a less time than to be old before I am really so ¶. I seize on even the least occasions of pleasure that come in my way. I know well, by hear-say, several sorts of pleasures, which are prudent, manly and honourable ; but opinion has not power enough over me to give me an appetite for them. I covet not so much to have them gallant, magnificent and pompous, as I do to have them delightful, easy to come at, and ready at hand. *A natura discedimus : populo nos damus, nullius rei bono auctori* ¶ ; “ we abandon “ nature to follow the popular taste, from which no “ good comes.” My philosophy is in action, in natural and present practice, very little in fancy. What a pleasure should I take in playing at cob-nut, or whipping a top!

And take every opportunity of enjoying pleasure.

*Non prenebat enim rumores ante salutem* †.

——He was too wise

Idle reports before his health to prize.

Pleasure is a quality of very little ambition. It thinks itself rich enough, without any mixture of reputation with it, and is best pleased in obscurity. That young man who should pretend to a palate for wine and sauces, ought to be whipped. There was nothing which I less knew

¶ Cicero's Treatise of old Age, ch. 10. ¶ Senec. epist. 99. † This is a very pleasant application of a grave verse, quoted out of Ennius by Cicero de Offic. lib. i cap. 24. where that poet speaking of Fabius Maximus, says, that, while he was acting for the public good, he was indifferent to every thing that was said at Rome to run down his conduct.



and valued, but now I learn it. I am very much ashamed of it, but what should I do? I am more ashamed and vexed at the occasions that prompt me to it. It is for us to doat and tell old wives stories, but young men must mind their reputation, and make a genteel figure. Youth is advancing into the world, and into credit. We are going out of it. *Sibi arma, sibi equos, sibi bastas, sibi pilam, sibi notationes, et cursus habeant; nobis semibus, exclusionibus multis, tales relinquant et tesseras* \*; “let them  
 “reserve to themselves arms, horses, spears, clubs, tennis, swimming, and racing; and, of the many sports,  
 “leave dice and draughts, and the chess-board, to us old  
 “men.” The laws themselves send us to our houses. I can do no less in favour of this wretched state into which I am pushed by my age, than to furnish it with play-things and amusements, as they do children, into whose class we are also relapsed. Both wisdom and folly will have enough to do to support and relieve me, by alternate offices, in this calamity of age.

*Misce stultitiam consiliis brevem* †.

Short folly mix with graver cares.

I also avoid the slightest attacks; for what would not have scratched me formerly, now pierce me through and through. My constitution begins naturally to be so crazy; *in fragili corpore odiosa omnis offensio est*; “to a  
 “weak constitution every injury is hateful.”

*Mensque pati durum sustinet agra nihil* ‡,

And a sick mind nothing that's harsh can bear.

I was always of so delicate a constitution that the least injury would hurt me; and I am now become more tender, and more exposed on all sides.

*Et minimæ vires frangere quassa valent* ¶.

A crack'd pitcher is soon broke.

\* Cit. de Senect. cap. 16. † Hor. lib. iv. ode 12. ver. 27. ‡ Ovid  
 de Ponto, lib. i. eleg. 5. ver. 18. ¶ Ovid. Trist. lib. iii. el. 11. ver. 22.



My judgment restrains me from repining and grumbling at the inconveniencies I suffer by the law of nature ; but it does not take away my feeling. Having no other view but a merry life, I would run from one end of the world to the other in quest of one year of pleasant and jocund tranquility. I have enough of that sort which is gloomy and stupid, but it makes me sleepy and brainfick. I am not satisfied with it. If there be any person, any good company in country or city, in France or elsewhere, resident or travelling, who can like my humour, and whose humours I can like, let them but give a whistle, and I will go and furnish them with essays fat and lean.

Since it is the prerogative of the mind to rescue itself from old age, I advise mine by all means to do it. Mean time let it wax green and flourish like mistletoe upon a dead tree. I fear however it is a traitor, because it has contracted so close a fraternity with the body, that it leaves me at every turn to follow the call of that. I flatter it, and deal with it apart, but in vain. I try, to no purpose, to break the connection, by laying Seneca and Catullus before it, and the representation of court ladies and royal masks. If its companion has the cholic, the mind seems also to be afflicted with it. Even the faculties that are peculiarly and properly its own, cannot then lift themselves up, but plainly find themselves cramped. There is no sprightliness in its production, if there be none at the same time in the body.

The mind too closely attached to the body.

Our teachers are in the wrong who, while they are in quest of the causes of the extraordinary transports of the mind, attribute it to a divine extasy, to love, to a martial fierceness, poetry and wine, have denied the share of it due to health. A boiling, vigorous, full, and idle state of health, such as formerly the verdure of youth and indolence furnished me with by fits ; that fire of gaiety raises lively clear flashes in the mind, beyond our natural light, which are accompanied with the most fantastical, if not the most desperate enthusiasm. Now it is no wonder if a contrary state of

The health and vigour of the body is the cause of the extraordinary sallies of the mind.



body sink and clog my spirits, and produce a contrary effect.

*Ad nullum confurgit opus cum corpore languet \* :*

The man whose body languishing doth lie,  
Cannot to any work himself apply.

And yet would have me obliged to it, as it pretends, for my opposing this agreement much more than is common with mankind to do ; at least, while we have a truce, let us banish difficulties and mischiefs from our commerce.

† Dum licet, *obductæ solvatur fronte senectus ‡.*

Let even the wrinkles of old age be smooth'd.

Montaigne's character of wisdom. *¶ Tetrix sunt amanda jocularibus ;*  
“ four chagrin must be sweetened with-  
“ jocularity.” I like wisdom that is gay  
and courteous, and fly from all crabbedness and austere-  
rity, having a suspicion of every grim countenance,  
*Tristemque vultus tetrici arrogantiam.*

*Et habet tristis quoque turba cynædos §.*

A dismal face oft hides a vicious heart.

I am sincerely of Plato's opinion, who says, that good or ill tempers are a great indication of the goodness or badness of the heart. Socrates had one settled countenance, but it was serene and smiling ; not a settled gloominess, like that of old Crassus, who was never seen to laugh. Virtue is a quality pleasant and gay.

Montaigne's opinion of those who shall condemn the freedom of his writings. I know very well that few will quarrel with the freedom of my writings, who have not more reason to quarrel with the freedom of their own thoughts. It is very humorous to play the severe critic on the writings of Plato, and to pass slightly over his

\* Corn. Gall. eleg. ii. ver. 125.  
‡ Hor. Epod. lib. ode 13. ver. 7.  
§ Mart. lib. vii. ver. 9.

† In the original it is “ et decet.”  
‡ Sidonius Apollinaris, lib. i.  
§ Mart. lib. vii. ver. 9.



pretended connections with Phædo, Dion, Stella, and Archeanassa. *Non pudeat dicere, quod non pudet sentire*; “Let no man be ashamed to speak what he is not ashamed to think.” I hate a froward pensive temper, which skims over the pleasures of life, and seizes and feeds upon its misfortunes, like the flies that cannot stick to a body that is well polished and sleek, but fasten and settle upon such as are rough and knotty; and like the cupping-glasses that only suck and draw the bad blood.

As for the rest, I have made it a rule to myself to dare to say all that I dare to do, and I am even displeased at thoughts that will not bear the light. The worst

Of the liberty he takes to say all that he dares to do.

of my actions and qualities do not appear to me so foul as I find it foul and base not to dare to own them. Every one is discreet in the confession, and men ought to be so in the action. The boldness of doing ill is in some measure recompensed and restrained by the boldness of confessing it. Whoever will oblige himself to tell the whole, should oblige himself to do nothing that he must be forced to conceal. God grant that this excessive liberty I take, may draw men to freedom superior to those sneaking squeamish virtues that spring from our imperfections; and that they may be brought to the standard of reason at the expence of my intemperance. A man must see and study his vice in order to reveal it: they who conceal it from others, commonly conceal it from themselves, and do not think they commit sin secretly enough, if they themselves see it. They withdraw and disguise it from their own consciences. *Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? Quia etiam nunc in illis est: somnium narrare vigilantis est* †; “why does no man confess his vices? Because he yet continues in them: it is for a man who is awake to tell his dream.” The diseases of the body are better known by being increased. We find that to be the gout, which we called a rheum, or a strain. The distempers of the soul, the stronger they are, keep themselves the more obscure; and the most diseased have the least feeling of them. We must

† Seneca, epist. 53.



therefore often bring them to the light with an unrelenting hand, and open and tear them from the bottom of our hearts. As in doing good, so in doing evil, the mere confession of it is sometimes a satisfaction. Is there any deformity in doing amiss that can excuse us from confessing it? It is so great a pain to me to dissemble, that I avoid being trusted with another person's secrets, for I have not the courage to disavow my knowledge of them. I can conceal it, but deny it I cannot, without great pains and vexation. To be very secret, a man must be so by nature, not by obligation. It is of little worth, in the service of a prince, to be secret, if a man be not also a liar. If he, who asked Thales, the Milesian, whether he ought solemnly to deny that he had committed uncleanness, had applied himself to me, I should have told him that he ought not; for I take lying to be a worse crime than the other. Thales advised him to quite the contrary, bidding him swear\*, in order to shield the greater crime by the less: nevertheless this counsel was not so much a choice, as a multiplication of vice; upon which let us say this, by the by, that we deal well with a conscientious man, when we propose to him some difficulty to counterbalance a vice; but when we shut him up betwixt two vices he is put to a hard choice, as was the case of Origen, when it was put to his choice, either to turn idolater, or to suffer himself to be carnally abused by a great Æthiopian slave that was brought to him. He submitted to the first condition, and, as it is said, vi-

\* Here Montaigne makes Thales say the very contrary to what he really said; and this, by mistaking the sense of Diogenes Laertius, the author whom he must have consulted for the answer: "a man," says Diogenes, "who had committed adultery, having asked Thales, whether he might not deny it upon oath?" Thales made answer, "But is not perjury even a worse crime than adultery?" See Diogenes' Life of Thales, lib. i. sect. 26. Perhaps Montaigne was deceived by some edition of this author, where the note of interrogation was omitted after the last word, which indeed is an omission that I find in Henry Wetstein's edition, which, excepting that, is very correct. But I am more inclined to think that, Montaigne's memory, so wonderfully apt to fail him, as he himself confesses, has here played him a scurvy trick; for whatever construction he put upon the words of Diogenes Laertius, it cannot be thence inferred that Thales advised the man to take an oath for the sake of shielding the greater evil by the less.



ciously. Yet those women of our time, who protest that they had rather burden their consciences with ten men than one mass, would be allowed to be women of taste, considering their error. If it be an indiscretion so to publish errors, there is no great danger of its being made a precedent and practice. For Aristo said, that the winds, which men most feared, were those that expose them. We must tuck up this ridiculous rag, which hides our manners. They send their consciences to the stews, and at the same time keep a starched countenance. They espouse the laws of ceremony, and there fix their duty; so that neither can injustice complain of incivility, nor malice of indiscretion. It is pity that every bad man is not also a fool; and that decency should be a cloak for his vice. Such plaisterings are only proper for a good substantial wall, which it is worth while to preserve and white-wash.

In complaisance to the Hugonots, who condemn our auricular private confession, I confess myself in public religiously and purely. As St. Augustin, Origen, and Hippocrates, published the errors of their opinions, I also discover those of my manners. I am all agog to make myself known, and care not to how many, provided it be truly; or, to say better, I long for nothing, but I cannot bear to be taken for what I am not by those who happen to know my name. He that does every thing for honour and glory, what does he think to gain by shewing himself to the public under a vizard, and by concealing what he really is from the knowledge of the people? Commend a crooked fellow for his fine stature, he has reason to take it for an affront. If you are a coward, and yet honoured for being a man of valour, is it you whom they mean? They take you for another person. I should be as fond of that man, who pleases himself with the compliments and congees that are made to him, as if he were the head of the company, when he is one of the meanest in the train. Archelaus, king of Macedonia, walking along the street, a person threw water on him; for which his attendants said, he ought to punish him.

Why Montaigne chose to be confessed in public.



him. "Nay, but," said the king, "he did not throw the water upon me, but on the man he took me to be." To one who informed Socrates, that the people spoke ill of him, "Not at all," said he, "for there is nothing in me of what they say." As for my part, whoever should commend me for being a good pilot, or very modest, or very chaste, I should owe him no thanks. And in like manner, whoever should call me traitor, robber, or drunkard, I should be as little offended. They who do not know themselves, may feed their vanity with false applause; but not I, who see myself, and look into the very bottom of my heart, and very well know what belongs to me. I am content to be less commended, provided I am better known. I might be reckoned a wise man in such a sort of wisdom as I take to be folly. I am chagrined that my Essays serve the ladies only as a common moveable, or furniture for the hall. This chapter will advance me to the closet. I love a little private conversation with them, for that which is public, is without favour and without favour. In farewells we are warmed with a more than ordinary affection for the things we take leave of. I take my final leave of this world's joys. These are our last embraces.

Why the action which brings us into the world, is excluded from serious and regular discourses?

But, to come to my subject, what is the reason that the act of generation, an action so natural, so necessary, and so justly the men's prerogative, what has it done that people dare not speak of it without a blush, and that it should be excluded from all serious and regular discourse? We boldly pronounce the words "kill, rob, betray," but the other we dare not mention so as to be heard. Does it mean that the less we exhale of the fact in speech, we have the more authority to swell it in thought? For it is happy that the words which are least spoken or written, and most kept in, are the best understood, and the most generally known. Every age, all ranks, know them as well as they do bread. They are imprinted in every one, without being expressed, and without voice and form. And the sex that is bound to say least of it, does it most.



It is an action which we have lost in the sanctuary of silence, out of which it is a crime to force it, instead of accusing and judging it; neither dare we to lash it, but by periphrasis, and in picture. A great favour to a criminal to be so detestable that justice reckons it unjust to touch and see him, and to be obliged to the severity of his condemnation for his liberty and security. Is it not the case here as it is with books, which sell and spread the more for being suppressed? For my part, I am ready to take Aristotle at his word,\* who says that bashfulness is an ornament to youth, but a reproach to old age. These verses are the doctrine of the old school, to which I adhere much rather than to the modern, as its virtues appear to me greater, and its vices less.

*\* Ceux qui par trop fuyant Venus estrivent  
Faillant autant que ceux qui trop la suivent.*

They err no less, who Venus too must shun,  
Than those who to her altars always run.

*Tu dea, tu rerum naturam sola gubernas,  
Nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras  
Exoritur, neque fit lætum, nec amabile quicquam †.*

Thou deity, by whom all nature's sway'd,  
Without whose power nothing can spring to light,  
Or beautiful, or lovely to the sight.

I cannot imagine who could set Pallas  
and the Muses at variance with Venus,  
and make them cold towards love; for I

Pallas and the  
Muses are in a  
great connection  
with Venus.

know no deities that tally better, or are  
more indebted to one another. He who will not own  
that the Muses have amorous imaginations, will rob  
them of the best entertainment they have, and of the  
noblest subject of their composition; and whoever shall  
deprive love of the communication and service of poetry,  
will disarm it of its best weapons. By these means they  
charge Pallas, the god of familiarity and benevolence,

\* Verses Amyot's translation of Plutarch, chap. 5.

† Lucret. lib. i. ver. 22.



and the Muses, who are the tutelar deities of humanity and justice, with the vice of ingratitude and disrespect. I have not been so long cashiered from the suit and service of that deity, but my memory still retains its strength and power.

*Agnosco veteris vestigia flammæ \*.*

Of my old flame there yet remain some sparks.

*Nec mihi deficiat calor hic hyemantibus annis.*

I have some heat left in my winter age.

*Qual l'alto Egeo, perche aquilone o noto  
Cessi, che tutto prima il volse e scosse,  
Non s' acbetta ci però, ma'l sono e'l moto  
Ritien de l' onde anco agitate e grosse †.*

As when a storm, which late with furious blast,  
Th' Ægean ocean heav'd, at length is past,  
While the high waves subside into a plain,  
Soft undulations move along the main.

But, as far as I understand of the matter, the abilities and valour of this god are more lively and animated, by the painting of poetry, than in their own essence.

*Et versus digitos habet ||.*

And there's harmony in verse to charm a Venus.

Poetry represents a kind of air more amorous than love itself. Venus is not so beautiful, stark-naked, alive, and panting, as she is here in Virgil.

*Dixerat, et niveis binc atque binc diva lacertis  
Cunstantem amplexu molli fovet : ille repente  
Accepit solitam flammam, notusque medullas  
Intravit calor, et labefacta per ossa cucurrit,*

\* Virg. Æneid. lib. iv. ver. 23.  
to 12. stanza 63.

† Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* liber. canto  
|| Juv. sat. 6. ver. 197



*Non secus atque olim tonitru cum rupta corusco  
Ignea rima micans percurrit lumine nimbos,  
————— ea verbaloquutus,  
Optatos dedit amplexus, placidumque petivit  
Conjugis infusus gremio per membra soporem \*.*

She said, and round him threw her snow white-arms,  
And warm'd him, wav'ring, with a soft embrace.  
He quickly felt the wonted flame, which pierc'd  
Swift to his marrow thro' his melting bones;  
As when in thunder, lanc'd along the sky,  
A streak of fire runs streaming thro' the clouds.

\* \* \* \* \*  
————— This having said,  
After the wish'd embrace, he sunk to rest,  
Softly reclin'd, on his fair consort's breast.

All the fault I find in these lines, is that he has represented her a little too much in rapture for a married Venus. In this discreet partnership the appetites are not usually so wanton, but more grave and dull. Love hates that its votaries should be sway'd by any motive foreign to itself, and is but cool in such familiarities as are formed and maintained under any other title, as marriage is, wherein it is reasonable to think that kindred and the dowry should have as much, or more weight, than comeliness and beauty. Men, say what they will, do not marry for themselves; they marry as much, or more, for the sake of posterity and their families. The interest and usefulness of marriage concerns our descendants far beyond our time; and therefore I like the way of negotiating it by a third hand, and by the judgment of others, rather than by that of the parties that are to be married: and how opposite is all this to the conventions of love! It is a kind of incest, as I think I have said elsewhere, to exert the efforts and extravagancies of an amorous licentiousness in that venerable, and sacred alliance. A man, says Aristotle, should accost his wife

The transports of love banished from marriage; and why.

\* Æneid. lib. viii. ver. 387, 392, 404, 405, 406.



with prudence and modesty, lest, by dealing with her too wantonly, the pleasure should make her exceed the bounds of reason. What he says with regard to conscience, the physicians say with regard to health, that pleasure excessively hot, lascivious, and frequent, corrupts the seed, and hinders conception. But it is said, on the contrary, that to supply a languishing congress as that is naturally, with a due and prolific heat, a man should offer at it but seldom, and at notable intervals.

† *Quô rapiat sitiens Venerem interiusque recondat* §.

I see no marriages that sooner miscarry, or are disturbed, than those which are spurred on by beauty and amorous desires. The foundations should be more solid and constant, and they should be proceeded in with circumspection. This furious ardour in them is good for nothing.

That love is no more to be found in the married state than virtue in nobility.

They who think to do honour to the married state, by joining love to it, are methinks like those who, in favour of virtue, hold that nobility is nothing else but virtue. They are indeed somewhat a-kin, but they differ very much; and therefore to confound their names and titles is doing wrong to both. Nobility is a fine quality, and with reason introduced; but, forasmuch as it is a quality dependent on another, and which may fall to a man who is vicious and good for nothing, it is far below virtue in estimation. If it be virtue, it is a virtue that is artificial and apparent, depending on time and chance, differing in form according to the various countries, living and mortal, without any source more than the river Nile, genealogical and common, of succession and semblance, drawn by a consequence that is a very weak one. Knowledge, power, bounty, beauty, riches, and all other qualities, fall into communication and commerce, but this is consummated in itself, and of no use to the service of another. There was proposed to one of our kings the choice of two competitors for a certain office,

† Montaigne has explained this verse enough before he quoted it.

§ Virg. Geo. lib. iii. ver. 137.



of whom the one was a gentleman, and the other was not. The king ordered that, without respect to quality, they should chuse him who had the most merit; but that when the worth of the competitors should appear to be intirely equal, then they should have respect to nobility. This was justly to give it its due rank. A young man unknown coming to Antigonus, to solicit that he might succeed to the post of his deceased father, a person of worth; he said to him, "In such preferments as these," my friend, "I do not so much regard the noble extraction of my soldiers as their prowess\*." And indeed it ought not to fare with soldiers as it did with the king of Sparta's officers, trumpets, minstrels, cooks, &c. who were succeeded in their offices by their children, how ignorant soever, in preference to those who had more experience in the business.

The people of Calicut exalt their nobility above the human species. They are prohibited marriage, and every employment, but what is military. They may have as many concubines as they desire, and the women as many panders without being jealous of one another: but it is a capital, and unpardonable crime to couple with a person of a meaner condition than themselves: nay, they think themselves polluted if they are but touched by one passing along; and, as if their nobility was strangely injured and wounded by it, they kill such as come but a little too near them; insomuch that those who are not noble are obliged to call out as they go, like the gondoliers of Venice, at the turnings of streets, for fear of running foul of one another; and the nobility command them to step aside to what part they please. By this means the nobility avoid what they reckon a perpetual ignominy, and the others certain death. No length of time, no favour of the prince, no office, or virtue, or riches, can make a plebeian become noble; to which this custom contributes, that marriages are prohibited betwixt families of different trades, insomuch that one descended from a shoemaker may not marry a carpenter; and the parents are obliged to train up their children exactly to

To what rank the nobility are promoted in the kingdom of Calicut.

\* Plutarch of false modesty, ch. 10.



the father's business, and to no other; by which means the distinction and continuation of their fortune is kept up.

The idea of a good marriage, is there be such, rejects the company and conditions of love: it endeavours to display those of friendship. It is a sweet society of life, full of constancy, trust, and an infinite number of useful and solid offices, and mutual obligations. No woman that has a true taste of it, or

———*Optato quam junxit lumine tæda \**,

who is married to her liking, would be willing to be in the stead of a mistress to her husband. If she be lodged in his affection, as a wife, she is then lodged much more honourably and securely. When his love is set upon, and importunate for another object, let any one but then ask him on which he had rather a disgrace should fall, on his wife or on his mistress, whose misfortune would trouble him most, and to which of them he wishes most grandeur; such questions admit of no doubt in a good marriage.

A good marriage, the most happy state in human society.

That we see so few good marriages is the greater token of their value; if well formed and adjusted, there is not a more beautiful scene in human society. We cannot do without it, and yet we are continually running it down. Just so it is in the cages, where the birds that are within are mad to get out, and those that are without would fain get in. Socrates, being asked whether it was most commodious, to take a wife or not, made answer, "Let a man do which he will, he will repent of it †." It is a contract, to which the common saying, *Homo homini, aut deus, aut lupus*, "man to man is either a God, or a devil," may very fitly be applied. There must be a concurrence of a great many qualities to constitute it. It is in this age fitter for mean and vulgar souls, which are not so much under the influence of diversions, curiosity, and idleness.

\* Catul. de Coma Berenices Carm. 64. ver. 79.    † Diog. Laert. lib. ii. §. 33.



Such wild humours as mine, which hates all sorts of connexion and restraint, are not so proper for it.

*Et mihi dulce magis resolato vivere colle \*.*

For liberty to me is far more sweet  
Than all the pleasures of the nuptial sheet.

Might I have had my will, I would not have married even wisdom itself, if she would have had me. But we may say what we please; we are carried away by custom, and the common practice of life. Most of my actions are governed by example, not by choice: and yet I did not comply with it properly. I was led and carried to it by strange occasions. For not only things that are most inconvenient, but the most deformed, the most vicious, and those to which we have the greatest aversion, may become acceptable by certain conditions and accidents: so vain is any human state. In reality, I was persuaded to marriage at a time when I was worse prepared for it, and more averse to it than I am now, that I have tried it. And as great a libertine as I am taken to be, I have in truth observed the marriage-articles more strictly than I either promised or expected. It is in vain to kick when a man is once fettered. A man ought to use his liberty sparingly; but after he has submitted to the marriage tie he must confine himself within the laws of the common duty, at least endeavour it all he can.

Why Montaigne married, though very ill-disposed for it.

They who enter into this contract with a view to behave in it with hatred and contempt, act unjustly, as well as unhand-  
somerly and equally harsh and injurious is that fine rule which I find passes from hand to hand among the women, like a sacred oracle.

Marriage ought to be exempt from hatred and contempt.

*Sers ton mary comme ton maistre,  
Et t'en garde comme d'un traistre.*

Serve thy husband like a waiter,  
But guard thyself as from a traitor.

\* Corn. Gall. eleg. 1. ver. 6.



Which is as much as to say, behave to him with a constrained, inimical, and distrustful reverence, which is a style of war and defiance. I am too mild for such rugged designs. To say the truth, I am not yet arrived to that perfection of cunning and complaisance, as to confound reason with injustice, and to ridicule every rule and order that does not agree with my appetite. Because I hate superstition I do not immediately run into irreligion. If a man does not always perform his duty, he ought at least always to love and acknowledge it. There is treachery in the marriage contract, if the affection of the parties be not mutual. We will now proceed.

How Virgil  
could think a  
marriage of  
free choice to  
be without fi-  
delity.

Our poet represents a marriage full of harmony and good agreement, in which however there is not much fidelity. Did he mean to say that it is not impossible for a person to yield to the importunities of love and yet reserve some duty towards marriage; and that it may be injured without being totally broken? A footman may happen to ride in his master's boots, and yet not hate him. Beauty, opportunity, and destiny (for destiny has also a hand in it)

———*fatum est in partibus illis*

*Quas sinus abscondit: nam si tibi sidera cessent  
Nil faciet longi mensura incognita nervi\*.*

Fate, which the whole world rules, exerts its spite,  
Ev'n in the parts conceal'd from common sight:  
And if the stars to favour you should fail,  
Your furniture of lust will not avail.

may have attached her to a stranger; yet not so intirely perhaps but she may have some link of love that still holds her to her husband. They are two designs, which have distinct paths without being confounded. A woman may yield to a man, whom she would by no means chuse to marry; I do not say from a dislike to his circumstances, but even to his person. Few men have made a wife of a mistress, but they have repented it: and, even in the other world, what an unhappy life does Jupiter lead with



his, whom he at first intrigued with, and enjoyed as a mistress? This is what they call disgracing, or undervaluing a thing, in order the sooner to obtain it. I have, in my time, known an instance where love has been shamefully and dishonestly cured by marriage. The considerations are too widely different. We love two things, which are not only different, but contrary without any impediment. Isocrates said, that the city of Athens was liked just in the same manner as the ladies of pleasure are. Every body loved to take a turn thither, and to pass away his time, but no body liked it so well as to be wedded to it; that is to say, to settle there, and make it his home. I have been vexed to see husbands hate their wives, only because they do them wrong. We should not however love them the less for our own faults; they should at least, upon the score of repentance and compassion, be dearer to us.

They are ends that are different, and yet somewhat compatible. Marriage has for its share, profit, justice, honour, and constancy; a flat, but more universal pleasure. Love is founded on pleasure only, and has it in truth more ticklish, lively, and acute; a pleasure inflamed by the difficulty of attaining it. There must needs be a sting and smart in it. It is no longer love if it be without darts and fire. The bounty of the ladies is too profuse in the married state, and blunts the point of affection and desire: to escape which inconvenience, do but see what pains Lycurgus and Plato take in their laws.

Difference betwixt marriage and love.

The women are not at all to blame, when they refuse the rules of life that are introduced into the world, forasmuch as they were made by the men, without their consent. There is naturally a contention and brawling betwixt them and us. The strictest agreement we have with them is even mixed with tumult and tempest. In the opinion of our author we deal inconsiderately with them in this. After we have discovered that they are, without comparison, more capable and ardent in the feats of love than we are, and

The severe laws imposed by the men upon the women before the latter gave their consent to them.



that the priest of old testified as much, who had been once while a man, and then a woman.

*Venus huic erat utraque nota \**.

Tiresias had both sexes try'd.

Likewise, after we have learnt from their own mouths the proof that was given of the truth of this by an emperor and an empress of Rome, who lived at different times, and were both famous for their superior achievements upon this occasion; he for deflowering in one night ten Sarmatian virgins, that were his captives; and she for having really had twenty-five bouts in one night, changing her man according to her necessity and her fancy.

*—adbuc ardens rigidae tentigine vulvæ,  
Et lassata viris, nondum satiata recessit †.*

Still burning with the rage of furious lust,  
Tir'd with enjoyment, but unquenched her thirst,

And, considering the quarrel that happened once in Catalonia betwixt a man and his wife, wherein the latter complaining of his too frequent addresses to her (not that I think so many as made her uneasy, for I believe no miracles except religious ones) as, under that pretext, to curtail and curb in this which is the very fundamental act of marriage, the authority of the husbands over their wives, and to shew that their frowardness and ill nature go beyond the nuptial bed, and spurn under foot the very charms and pleasures of Venus the husband made answer, like an unnatural brute as he was, that on fast-days he could not content himself with less than ten courses. Upon this came out a remarkable decree of the queen of Arragon; by which, after the mature deliberation of council, this good queen, to give a rule and example to all future times of the moderation and modesty required in lawful marriage, appointed the number of six in any one day to be a legal and necessary stint; releasing and

\* Ovid Metam. lib. iii. fab. 3. ver 23.

† Juv. sat. 6. ver. 135,  
quirit.



quitting very much of the necessity and desire of her sex, for the sake, she said, of establishing an easy, and consequently a permanent and unchangeable form; whereupon the doctors cry out, what the devil must be the female appetite and concupiscence, since their reason, their reformation, and their virtue are taxed at such a rate, considering the different judgment of our appetites? For Solon, the patron of the law-school\*, only taxed us at three times a month, that this conjugal commerce might not fail. After having, I say, both believed and preached this, we go so far as to injoin them continency for their peculiar portion, and upon the most rigorous penalties.

Though there is no passion more hard to contend with than this, we require that the women alone should resist it; not barely as a vice, but as an execrable abomination, worse than irreligion, or parricide; and yet we fall into it without blame and reproach. Even those of us, who have endeavoured to master this passion, have acknowledged how difficult, or rather impossible it is to subdue, weaken, and cool the body by the use of material remedies. We, on the contrary, desire constitutions that are sound, vigorous, in good plight, well fed, and chaste at the same time, that is both hot and cold; for marriage, which we say was enjoined us to hinder them from burning, is little refreshment to them according to our behaviour. If the women take a man, the vigour of whose age is still boiling, he will be proud of spreading it elsewhere.

Men give themselves a loose to the passion of love, and severely forbid it at the same time to the women.

*Sit tandem pudor aut eamus in jus  
Multis mentula millibus redempta,  
Non est hæc tua, Bassæ, vendidisti †.*

Bassus! for shame at length give over,  
Or I to justice must my cause resign;

\* Plutarch in his treatise, intitled, *Ἔρωτις*, of Love, p. 769 tom. .ii. the Paris edition in 1624.

† Martial. lib. xii. epig. 99. ver. 10.



The goods with which you play the rover,  
Were dearly bought, and are no longer thine.

The philosopher Polemon \* was justly prosecuted by his wife for sowing in a barren field the seed that was due to a fruitful one. If, on the other hand, they chuse decayed men they will be in a worse condition in marriage than maids and widows. We think them well provided because they have a man always with them; just as the Romans thought Clodia Læta, a vestal virgin, to have been violated because Caligula approached her, though it was affirmed, that he did no more than approached her. But, on the contrary, we by this add to their necessity, forasmuch as the contest and company of any man whatsoever rouses their desire, which, in solitude would be more quiet. And it is likely that it was in order to render their chastity the more meritorious by this circumstance and consideration, that Boleslaus and his wife Kinge, the sovereigns of Poland, united in a vow of chastity, when in bed together on their very wedding night, and kept it in spite of the delights of matrimony.

The whole of the education given to daughters, tends to inspire them with a passion for love.

We train them up from their childhood to the negotiations of love. Their beauty, their dress, their knowledge, their speech, and their whole instruction tend only to this point. Their governesses imprint nothing in them but the idea of love, if it were only by continually representing it to them, to give them a disgust to it. My daughter, (the only child I have) is now of an age, wherein forward young women are permitted by the laws to marry. She is of a puny, tender, and delicate constitution, and has been also brought up by her mother in a private particular manner, so that she is but now beginning to be weaned from her childish simplicity. She was one day in my presence reading a French book, wherein the word Fouteau † occurred, which is the name of a tree well known, viz. the beech. The woman, to whose conduct she is committed, stopped her short a little roughly, and made her skip over

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Polemon, lib. iii. sect. 17. † A word very similar in the sound to a term of lechery in the French language.



that dangerous term. I let her alone, rather than break into their rules, for I never concern myself in that sort of government. The polity of the females has a mysterious train which we must leave to them. But if I am not mistaken, a conversation with twenty lacqueys for six months, would not so deeply have imprinted in her fancy the meaning, application, and all the consequences of the sound of those two wicked syllables, as this good old woman did by her reprimand and prohibition.

*Motus doceri gaudet Ionicos  
Matura virgo, et fingitur artubus  
Jam nunc, et incestos amores  
De tenero meditatur ungui \*.*

With pliant limbs the ripen'd maid,  
Now joys to learn the wanton tread  
Of dance Ionic, and to prove  
The pleasures of forbidden love.

Let them but dispense a little with ceremony ; let them but enter into the freedom of conversation ; we are but children in this science compared to them. Were you to hear them set forth our courtship and compliments, they give you plainly to understand, that we bring them nothing which they did not know before, and had digested without our assistance. Would you think with Plato, that they were heretofore debauched when very young ? I happened one day to be at a place, where I could, without being at all suspected, over-hear some of the discourse that passed betwixt them. What can I say of it ? By our lady, (said I) it is high time for us to go and study the phrases of Amadis, and the registers of Boccace and Aretine, to be able to cope with them. We employ our time to good purpose indeed. There is not an expression, an example, or a proceeding, which they do not know better than our books. It is a discipline that has its source in their veins,

Moreover this passion is natural to them.

*Et mentem Venus ipsa dedit †.*

Venus herself did them inspire.

\* Horace, lib. iii. ode 6, ver. 21, &c.

† Virg. Geo. lib. iii. ver. 267.



and which those good instructors, nature, youth, and health, are continually suggesting to their fancy. They need not be at the pains to learn, they naturally breed it.

*Nec tantum niveo gavisa est ulla columbo,  
Compar, vel si quid dicitur improbius,  
Oscula mordenti semper decerpere rostro,  
Quantum præcipue multicola est mulier\*.*

Not more delighted is the milk-white dove,  
(Or any creature that's more prone to love)  
Still to be billing with her mate, than is  
Th' inconstant woman ev'ry man to kiss.

Insomuch that did not fear and honour, of which they have their share, give a little check to this natural violence of their desire, we would become scandalous. All the motion in the world is bent and tends to this copulation; it is a matter infused throughout the whole; it is a centre to which all things point. We even find edicts of old and wise Rome made for the service of love, and precepts of Socrates for the instructions of courtezans.

*Nec non libelli Stoici inter sericos  
Facere pulvillos amant §.*

The Stoics with all their gravity  
Delighted to write on subjects of gallantry.

Zeno, amongst other laws, regulated the divarications and motions in getting a maiden-head. What was the signification of the philosopher Strato's book of carnal copulation? And of what did Theophrastus treat in those books which he intitled, one the Lover, the other Love? And what did Aristippus write of in his book of ancient delights? What is the purport of those copious and lively descriptions in Plato, of the amours of his time? and of Demetrius Phalareus's book called the Lover? And Clinias, or the ravished Lover, by Heraclides Ponticus? And that of getting Children, or of Weddings, by Antisthenes, and the other of the master, or the lover? And that of amorous exercises, by Aristo?

\* Catullus. Carm. lxvi. ver. 125, &c.

§ Hor. Epod. lib. ode viii. ver. 15, 16.



The two books, one of Love, the other the Art of Love, by Cleanthes? The amorous dialogues of Spherus? And the fable of Jupiter and Juno, by Chrysippus, impudent beyond all toleration? And his fifty lascivious epistles? I chuse to set aside the writings of the philosophers of the Epicurean sect, the protectors of sensual pleasures. There were fifty deities in time past assigned to this office. There is a nation where to assuage the concupiscence of those who went to their devotion, they kept strumpets in the temples for their enjoyment, and it was an act of ceremony to lie with them before the service. *Nimirum propter continentiam, incontinentia necessaria est, incendium ignibus extinguitur*; “incontinence is necessary for the sake of continency, as a blast is to extinguish a fire.”

In the greatest part of the world this member of our body has been deified. In one, and the same province, some flayed themselves for the sake of offering and consecrating a piece of their skin; others offered and consecrated their seed. In another province, the young men made public incisions betwixt the skin and the flesh of that part, and made several overtures in it, through which they thrust splinters, the longest and biggest that they could endure; of which splinters they afterwards made a fire for a burnt offering to their gods, being not reckoned either over-vigorous or chaste if they did but shrink under that cruel torture. Elsewhere, the most sacred magistrate was revered and recognized by those parts; and in several ceremonies the image of them was pompously carried in public procession to the honour of several divinities. The Egyptian ladies at the Bacchanalian feasts, wore one about their necks carved in wood, exquisitely formed, as large and heavy as each was able to bear; besides that in the statue of their god, there was a representation of one which measured more\* than the rest of the body. The married women in my neighbourhood represent the shape of it in the kerchiefs upon their fore-top, by way of ostentation, for the enjoyment

\* Herodot. lib. ii. p. 122. Αἰδοῖον ὃ πολλὰ τέω ἔλασσον ἢ τὸ ἄλλο σωμαῖον, “a member which is not much less than the rest of the body.” I cannot imagine why Montaigne took it into his head here to improve upon the extravagant exaggeration of the Egyptians.



they have had of it, and when they come to be widows they turn it behind, and hide it under their coifs. The most sage matrons at Rome were proud of offering flowers and garlands to the god Priapus, and the virgins at the time of their wedding were seated upon his most criminal parts. Nay, I know not whether I have not in my time seen some such air of devotion. What was the meaning of that ridiculous cod-piece worn by our fore-fathers, and by the Swiss even to this day? To what purpose is the display we make at this time of the form of our implements under our gaskins; and often, which is worse, by a false and imposing representation beyond their natural size? I can scarce help thinking, that this sort of garb was invented in the better and more conscientious ages, that mankind might not be deceived, by every one's giving an account of his talent in public. The most simple nations wear them still with some resemblance to the truth. In those days the workman was informed, as he is now, of the measure of the arm or foot. That honest man, who, when I was but a youngster, castrated so many fine antique statues in his great city, for fear of corrupting the sight, according to the opinion of that other honest old gentleman,

\* *Flagitii principium est nudare inter cives corpora;*  
 “the custom of appearing naked in public,” has introduced a depravity of manners amongst us, ought to have considered that, as in the mysteries of the Bona Dea, every masculine appearance was excluded; so it was doing nothing if he did not also cause horses, asses, and in short, all nature to be castrated.

*Omne adeo genus in terris hominumque, ferarumque  
 Et genus æquæreum, pecudes, pislæque volucres,  
 In furias ignemque ruunt †.*

All creatures thus the raging passion find;  
 For whether they be those of human kind,  
 Beasts, wild or tame, fish, or the feather'd choir,  
 They're each inflam'd with wanton love's desire.

\* It was a saying of Ennius, quoted by Cicero, with this mark of approbation, “Bene ergo Ennius Flagitii,” &c. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 33.

† Virg. Geo. lib. iii. ver. 144, &c.



The gods, says Plato, have furnished us men with an unruly tyrannical member, which like a furious animal, attempts to make all things subject to its violent appetite : and they have also given the women one like a voracious and craving animal ; which, if nourishment be refused in its season, rages, impatient of delay ; and its fury working in their bodies, stops the passages, hinders respiration, and causes a thousand disorders, till by having sucked in the fruit of the common thirst, the bottom of their matrix is plentifully sprinkled, and furnished with seed.

Now my legislator should also have considered, that perhaps, it were a more chaste and beneficial practice, to let them know it betimes to the life, than to permit them to guess what it is, according to the freedom and warmth of their imagination. Instead of the real parts, they therein substitute others, that are three times more extravagant, through their desires and hopes. And a certain friend of mine was ruined by having exposed his, when it was not yet proper to apply them to their more serious use. Who knows what mischief is done by those enormous pictures which the boys draw upon the passages and stair-cases of the royal palaces ? From hence proceeds a cruel contempt of our natural furniture. And how do we know but that Plato, by ordering, after the example of other well instituted republics, that both the men and the women, old and young, should expose themselves naked to one another in his gymnastics, had a view to this ? The Indian women, who see the men stark naked, have at least palled their sense of seeing. And though it is said by the women of the great kingdom of Pegu, (who have nothing to cover them below the waist, but a cloth slit before, which is so scanty, that with all the ceremonious decency they pretend to, all they have is to be seen at every step) that this was an invention purely to allure the men to them, and to draw off their affection from those of their own sex, to which that nation is entirely addicted ; it may be said, that they lose more than they get by it, and that an appetite is not so sharp to an object after it has been once glutted by the sight of it. Also Livia said, that to a vir-  
tuous



truous woman, the sight of a naked man is no more than that of an image\*. The Lacedæmonian women, more virgins when wives, than our daughters are, daily saw the young men of their city stripped naked at their exercises, while they themselves were not over careful to hide their thighs as they walked, thinking themselves sufficiently covered by their virtue without any farding-gale. But they of whom St. Austin speaks, have ascribed to nakedness a wonderful power of temptation, by making it a doubt, whether women at the day of judgment shall arise again in their own sex, and not rather in ours, that we may not be again tempted in that state of holiness. In short, we allure and provoke them by all manner of means: we are incessantly heating and stirring up their imagination, and yet we find fault. Let us confess the truth; there is scarce a man of us who is not more afraid of the shame accruing to him from the vices of his wife, than from his own; and who is not more solicitous for the conscience of his good wife (marvellous charity!) than for his own; who had not rather be guilty of theft and sacrilege, and that his wife should be a murderess and a heretic, than that she should be as immodest as her husband. An unjust estimate of vices this! Both we and they are liable to a thousand corruptions, more mischievous and unnatural than lasciviousness. But we form and poise vices, not according to nature, but according to our interest; by which means they assume so many various forms.

The severity of our decrees renders the application of the women to this vice more violent and vicious than is consistent with the nature of it, and involves it in consequences worse than their cause. They would be glad to go to the courts of law for gain, and to the field of battle for honour, rather than, in the midst of ease and pleasure, to have to do with what is so difficult to preserve. Do not they see that there is neither merchant, nor lawyer, nor soldier, who does not quit his business for the pursuit of this; and the very porter and cobbler too, jaded and oppressed as they are with labour and hunger?



*Nunc tu quæ tenuit dives Achæmenes,  
Aut pinguis Phrygiæ Mygdonias opes,  
Permutare velis crine Liciniæ,  
Plenas aut Arabum domos?*

*Dum flagrantia detorquet ad oscula  
Cervicem, aut facili sævitiâ negat,  
Quæ poscente magis gaudeat eripi,  
Interdum rapere occupet \*.*

Wouldst thou, for all that Achæmenes had,  
Or all the Phrygian wealth before thee laid,  
Or riches that in Arab's houses are,

Exchange one lock of dear Licinia's hair?  
While to the fervent kiss her neck she plies,  
Or with a pretty anger then denies  
What she had rather you would snatch by far,  
Than that you should desist out of despair.

I question whether the exploits of Cæ-  
far and Alexander were performed with a  
resolution more inflexible than that of a  
beautiful young woman, bred up in high life, surrounded  
by so many vicious examples, and yet preserving her-  
self inviolate in the midst of a thousand continual and  
powerful solicitations. There is no action more difficult,  
and yet more vigorous than this not-doing. I take it  
that it is more easy for a person to wear a suit of armour  
all the days of one's life than a maidenhead: and the  
vow of virginity is of all others the most noble, as being  
the most burdensome. St. Jerom says, *Diaboli virtus in  
lumbis est.*

Chastity in a wo-  
man hard to be  
kept.

We have certainly resigned the most  
arduous, and the most vigorous of human  
endeavours to the ladies; and let them  
by all means have the honour of it. This  
ought to be a singular spur to excite them  
to hold it out obstinately. It is a fine subject for them  
to brave us, and to trample under foot that vain pre-  
eminence in valour and virtue, which we pretend to  
over them. They will find that, if they do but keep

What ought to  
be an encourage-  
ment to the wo-  
men to take  
great care of it.

\* Horace, lib. ii. ode 12: ver. 21, &c.



a guard upon themselves, they will not only be the more esteemed, but the better beloved for it. A gallant gentleman does not abandon his pursuit because he has met with a denial, provided it be a denial from chastity, and not from aversion. We may swear, threaten, and complain, as much as we will; we lye all the while; for we love them the better for it. There is no allure-ment like modesty, if it be not with harsh treatment and sour looks: It is stupidity and meanness to be obstinate against hatred and contempt; but against a virtuous and steddý resolution, accompanied with a grateful principle, it is the exercise of a noble and generous soul. The ladies may acknowledge our services to a certain degree, and give us civilly to understand that they do not disdain us; for the law which enjoins them to abhor us, because we adore them, and hate us because we love them, is certainly a cruel one, were it only for the difficulty of complying with it. Why will they not hear our offers and demands as long as they are circumscribed within the bounds of modesty? Wherefore should we guess that they have a freer meaning to themselves? A certain queen of our time said ingenuously, that to refuse these advantages is a testimony of weakness in a woman, and an impeachment of her own readiness; and that no lady could boast of her chastity who had not been tempted. The limits of honour are not so straitened but it may relax itself a little, and may be dispensed with in some measure without a forfeiture. There lies before its frontier some space free, indifferent, and neuter. He that has drove it by force into its own nook and fort, is a simpleton if he be not satisfied with his fortune. The value of the conquest is considered by the difficulty of it. Would you know what impression your service, and your merit, have made upon her heart, measure it by her behaviour. There are some women perhaps who may grant more that do not grant so much. The obligation of a benefit is altogether connected with the will of the person that grants it, the other circumstances co-incident with the favour, being dumb, dead, and casual. It costs her dearer to grant you that little, than it would her companion to grant her all.

If



If in any thing rarity inhances the value, it ought in this. Do not consider how little it is that is given, but how few have it to give. The value of money varies according to the coin, and stamp of the place. Whatever the spite and indiscretion of some persons may make them say as to the excess of their discontent, virtue and truth will always regain their advantage. I have known some who, after their reputation had for a long time been blasted, have regained the universal approbation of mankind merely by their constancy, without any care or art; after which every one repented, and recanted what he had believed; and from maids that were a little suspected, they have afterwards held the first rank among the ladies of honour. Somebody said to Plato that all the world spoke ill of him, "Let them say what they will," said he, "I will live so as to make them change their note." Besides the fear of God, and the value of a renown so uncommon, which ought to incite them to take care of themselves, the corruption of this age compels them to it: and if I was in their place, there is nothing that I would not do rather than trust my reputation in such dangerous hands. I remember formerly that the pleasure of telling (a pleasure little inferiour to that of doing) was only indulged to be communicated to one entire faithful friend; whereas now, boasting of favours received, and of the secret liberality of the ladies, has a great share in the common table-talk, and conversation at assemblies. In truth it is an argument of too abject, and too mean a spirit, to suffer those tender and obliging favours to be so insolently persecuted, rummaged, and ransacked by persons so ungrateful, indiscreet, and inconstant.

This our immoderate and unwarrantable exasperation against this vice of incontinence, arises from the most trifling and tempestuous disease that afflicts the human mind, which is jealousy.

The unreasonable-  
ableness of jea-  
lousy.



\* *Quis vetat apposito lumen de lumine sumi?  
Dent licet assidue, nil tamen inde perit.*

Although a torch should lend its flame  
To give another light,  
Its lustre still remains the same,  
And shews as fair and bright.

That passion, and its sister envy, seem to be the most silly of all the tribe. As to the latter, I can say but little of it. It is a passion, though it is represented so strong and powerful, which, thanks to it, has no room in my breast. As to the former, I have some knowledge of it at least by sight. The very beasts feel it. Chratis, the shepherd, having fallen in love with a she-goat, the male, while the shepherd was asleep, went, in a fit of jealousy, and butted him with its head till it beat out his brains †.

The wisest of men and nations have been the least touched with this passion.

We have carried this passion to as great an excess as some of the barbarous nations. The best disciplined of them have been tainted with it, and with reason, but not transported to fury by it.

*Ense maritali nemo confessus adulter  
Purpureo Stygias sanguine tinxit aquas ||.*

Ne'er did adulterer, by the husband slain,  
With purple blood the Stygian waters stain.

Lucullus, Cæsar, Pompey, Anthony, Cato, and other brave men, were cuckolds, and knew it without making any disturbance about it; and in those times there was but one fool, Lepidus, who broke his heart upon it §.

\* The sense of the last verse is in Ovid's *Arte Amandi*, lib. iii. ver. 93. but Montaigne has taken the words from an epigram, intitled, *Priapus in Veterum Poetarum Catalectis*, which begins thus,

“ Obscure poteram tibi dicere, da mihi quod tu  
“ Des licet assidue, nil tamen inde perit.

† *Ælian.* lib. xii. cap. 42. of his treatise of animals. || *Ovid.* § The father of one of the triumvirate, who died, says Plutarch, having broke his heart, not so much by the distress of his affairs, as by a discovery he made from a letter which fell into his hands that his wife had forfeited her honour. *The Life of Pompey*, ch. 5. of Amyot's translation.



*Ab tum te miserum malique fati,  
Quem attractis pedibus patente portâ,  
Percurrent mugilesque raphanique \*.*

Wretched will then be thy malignant fate,  
When by the heels they drag thee from the gate, }  
Thro' show'rs of rotten roots and stinking scate. }

And the God of our poet, when he surprized one of her gallants with his wife, satisfied himself with only putting them to shame.

Vulcan not very jealous of his wife Venus.

————— *atque alignis de diis non tristibus optat  
Sic fieri turpes †.*

One of the Gods, to merriment dispos'd,  
Seeing the lovers in the net inclos'd,  
Wished that he had to shame been so expos'd. }

Yet he takes fire at the soft careffes with which she accosts him, complaining that she thereby shewed a jealousy of his affection.

*Quid causas petis ex alto? fiducia cessit  
Quò tibi, diva, mei || ?*

Why are, my Goddess, all these reasons tried?  
Say why in me no longer you confide?

Nay, she desires armour of him for her bastard.

*Arma rogo, genitrix nato §.*

The mother for her son does armour crave.

Which is freely granted : and Vulcan speaks honourably of Æneas.

\* This was a punishment, more infamous than fatal, inflicted on adulterers when they were taken in the fact, Catull. to Aurelius, carm. 16. ver. 17, &c. † Ovid's Met. lib. iv. fab. 5. ver. 21, 22. || Virg. Æneid, lib. viii. ver. 395. § Ibid. ver. 383.



*Arma acri facienda viro\*.*

Armour must for a valiant man be made.

I consent to leave this excess of goodness to the Gods:

*Nec Divis homines componere æquum est †.*

Nor is it fit to equal men with Gods.

As to the confounding of children, besides that the gravest legislators ordain and affect it in their republics, it does not concern the women, in whom this passion of jealousy is, I know not how, still more firmly established.

——*Sæpe etiam Juno maxima cœluorum  
Conjugis in culpa flagravat quotidiana ‡.*

And Juno, with fierce jealousy inflam'd,  
Her husband's daily slips has often blam'd.

How the women are tortured by jealousy, and how odious they become when they abandon themselves to this passion.

When jealousy seizes these poor weak souls, incapable of making resistance, it is pity to see how cruelly it drags them on, and tyrannizes over them. It insinuates itself into them under the colour of friendship, but after it has once possessed them, the same causes which served for a foundation of good will, serve as a foundation of mortal hatred. Of all the distempers of the mind it is that which most things contribute to nourish, and fewest to remedy. The virtue, health, merit, the reputation of the husband, stimulate their spite and rage.

*Nullæ sunt inimiciæ nisi amoris acerbæ ‡.*

No enmities so keen as those of love.

This fever defaces and corrupts all that they have of the beautiful and good in other respects; and there's no ac-

\* Virg. *Æneid.* lib. viii. ver. 441. † Catullus ad Mantium, carm. 66. ver. 141. ‡ Id. *ibid.* ver. 138, 139. ‡ Propertius, lib. ii. eleg. 8. ver. iii.



tion of a jealous women, be she ever so chaste, and ever so good a housewife; that does not savour of founess and impertinence. It is a furious agitation that throws them back to an extremity quite contrary to its cause. This was but too plainly verified by one \* Octavius at Rome, who, having lain with Pontia Posthumia, found his love so much increased by fruition that he solicited her with all importunity to marry him, which, finding he could not persuade her to †, his extreme love for her hurried him to actions of the most cruel and mortal hatred, so that in fact he killed her. In like manner the ordinary symptoms of this other distemper of love are in intestine hatreds, private conspiracies, and combinations.

——*notumque, furens quid fœmino possit ‡.*

What a woman is capable of doing in her fury is not unknown.

And a rage the more violent, because it is forced to smother itself under the pretence of good will.

Now the obligation of chastity is very extensive. Is it their will which we would have them curb? This is a very pliant and active faculty, and is very prompt to be stopped. How if dreams sometimes engage the women so far that they cannot deny them? It is not in the power of them, nor perhaps of chastity itself, because it is a female, to defend themselves from concupiscence and desire. If we are only interested in their will, what a case are we in then? Do but imagine what a great throng there would be of men to obtain the privilege of flying, like a feathered arrow, without eyes and tongue, to the arms of every woman that would accept them. The Scythian women caused the eyes of § all their slaves and prisoners of war to be plucked out,

The obligation to chastity hard to observe.

\* Tacitus Annals, lib. xiii. cap. 44. calls him Octavius Sagitta. † Id. ibid. ‡ Virg. Æneid. lib. v. ver. 6. § Herodotus, lib. 4. p. 255. does not say that the Scythian women had the eyes of their slaves plucked out for the purpose assigned by Montaigne, but that the Scythians themselves deprived all their slaves of sight for the purpose of drawing milk from their mares,



out, that they might make use of them with the more freedom and secrecy. Oh ! the furious advantage of opportunity ! Should any one ask me what was the first thing to be done in love, I would answer, that it was to know how to nick the happy moment ; and the same as to the second, and the third things. It is the critical point that does every thing. Opportunity has often failed me, and sometimes I have miscarried in the attempt. May I never again have the mortifying circumstance to be laughed at. There is in this age more necessity for temerity, for which our youth plead their heat of blood as an excuse. But, were the women to examine the matter more strictly, they would find that it rather proceeded from contempt. I had a superstitious fear of giving offence, and have a hearty respect where I love. Besides, he who in this traffic takes away the reverence of it, defaces its lustre. I would in this affair have a man be a little childish, timorous, and servile. If not altogether in this, I have in other things some airs of that foolish bashfulness which Plutarch speaks of, and the course of my life has been divers ways hurt and blemished by it ; a quality very ill suiting my universal form. What is there also amongst us but sedition and discord ? I can as ill brook to take a refusal as I can to give one : and it so much troubles me to be troublesome to another person, that in cases where I am forced to try the good will of any one in a matter that is doubtful, and will be chargeable to him, I do it faintly, and against the grain. But if it be to serve myself (though Homer, *Odyssy*, lib. xvii. ver. 347. says very true, that "Modesty is a foolish virtue in an indigent person," I commonly substitute a third person to blush in my stead, and have the like difficulty to deny those who employ me ; so that it has sometimes befallen me to have had a mind to deny when the thing was not in my power. It is a folly therefore to attempt to curb in women a desire that is so vehement in them, and so natural : and, when I hear

mares, which was their food. But it does not appear very plain that there was a necessity of blinding those poor slaves for this work ; and therefore the reason which Montaigne assigns for it is much more easy to comprehend,

some



some of them boast of having a will so innocent and cool, I laugh at them. They retire too far back. If she be an old toothless decrepid trot, or a young dry scrag, though they are not altogether to be believed, they may say it at least with more probability. But they, who are yet capable of love, and still pant with desire, spoil their own market; forasmuch as indiscreet excuses tend to accuse them; like a gentleman in my neighbourhood, suspected of impotency,

*Languidior temerâ cui pendens ficula betâ  
Nunquam se mediam sustulit ad tunicam ‡.*

who, three or four days after he was married, in order to justify himself, swore point-blank that he had rode twenty stages the night before; which oath was afterwards made use of to dissolve the marriage. Besides, it is saying nothing to the purpose; for there is no continency nor virtue where there is no contrary effort. It is true, it must be said, but I am not ready to comply. The saints themselves talk in this manner; I mean those who boast in good earnest of their coldness and insensibility, and who put on a serious countenance in order to be believed; for when it is spoken with an affected look, where the eyes give the lie to the tongue, and when they use the cant of their profession, which always goes against the hair, I like it well. I adore freedom and simplicity, but there is no remedy; if it be not altogether simple and childish, it is silly and unbecoming the ladies in this commerce, and immediately verges to impudence. Their disguises and their figures only serve to cozen fools. Lying is there in its seat of honour. It is a bye-way that leads us to the truth by a back-door. If we cannot curb their imaginations, what is it we would have them to do? Do, indeed? there are ways enough by which chastity may be violated without any foreign communication,

‡ Catull. carm. 65. ver. 21, 22. of Mattaire's edition,



*Illud sæpe facit quod sine teste fecit* \*.

He often does himself apply  
To that he does when none is by.

And they whom we least suspect are perhaps the most to be feared. Their crimes that make the least noise are the worst, or as we say, the still sow eats the most malt.

*Offendor mæchâ simplicitate minùs* †.

A profess'd strumpet gives me less offence.

There are means capable of violating their chastity without immodesty, and, which is more without their knowledge §. *Obstetrix virginis cujusdam integritatem manu velut explorans, sive malevolentia, sive inscitia, sive casu, dum inspicit, perdidit.* Some have lost their maidenhead by a too curious search for it, and others by dallying with it have destroyed it. We cannot exactly circumscribe the actions which we forbid them. There is a necessity for couching our law under general and uncertain terms. The very idea which we form for their chastity is ridiculous; for among the extraordinary examples of it, which I have met with, are Fatua the wife of Faunus, who after her marriage, never suffered herself to be seen by any man whatsoever; and the wife of Hiero, who never knew that her husband had a stinking breath, because she imagined that it was a quality common to all men ||. They must be insensible and invisible, or we cannot be easy.

Chastity depends  
on the innocence  
of the will.

But we confess that the best way to form a judgment of this duty, is by an inspection into the will. There have been husbands who have suffered this accident, not only without reproaching, or taking offence at their wives, but with special obligation to them, and a recommendation of their virtue. There was a woman that prized

\* Martial, lib. vii. ep. 61. ver 6. † Id. lib. vi. ep. 7. § These words are a confirmation of what Montaigne has been saying, and though they are to be met with in St. Austin's treatise, de Civitate Dei, lib. i. cap. 18. they are too gross to be put into plain English. || Plutarch, in his remarkable Passages of ancient Kings.



her honour above her life, who prostituted it to the furious lust of a mortal enemy, to save her husband's life; and thereby did that for him, which she would by no means have done for herself. This is not a place to produce such instances; they are too sublime and too rich to be set to view by any light that I can throw upon them. Let us reserve them for a nobler place. But as to instances of a more common lustre, are there not women every day amongst us, who let themselves out to hire only for the benefit of their husbands, and by their express order and brokerage? Thus heretofore Phaulius of Argos, to gratify his ambition, offered his wife to king Philip, just as Galba did out of civility; who having invited Mecænas to supper, and finding that his wife and he made love-signs by their mutual ogling, fell back on his couch, like a man greatly oppressed with sleepiness, to give opportunity to their amours\*: and this he owned too with a very good grace; for at the same time, a servant presuming to meddle with the plates, &c. that were upon the table, he said to him very frankly; "How now, you rascal? do not you perceive that I only sleep to oblige Mecænas?" There are some licentious men, whose wills may be more reformed than those of others that behave to outward appearance with more regularity. As we see some who complain of having made a vow of chastity before they came to years of discretion; I have also known others complain truly of having as early devoted themselves to debauchery. The vice of parents, or the force of necessity, which is a rude counsellor, may be the cause of it. In the East Indies, though chastity be of singular recommendation, yet custom permitted a married woman to prostitute herself to any one that would present her with an elephant; and proud she was that she had such a value set on her. Phœdon the philosopher, after the conquest of Elis, his native country, made it his trade to prostitute the beauty of his youth, as long as it lasted, for money to support him. And Solon, they say, was the first man in Greece, who by

Women prostituted by their husbands for lucre.

\* Plutarch, in his Treatise of Love, p. 16.



his laws gave liberty to the women, at the expence of their modesty, to provide for the necessaries of life; a custom, which Herodotus says, was received in many governments before his time. Besides, what is any one the better for such a painful solicitude? For be the passion of jealousy ever so just, we ought to consider whether it will turn out to our advantage. Does any man think, that with all his industry, he can put an effectual bar upon the women?

*Pone seram, cohibe; sed quis custodiet ipsos  
Custodes? Cauta est, et ab illis incipit uxor\*.*

Lock up your wife, or else, as some advise,  
Set a strict watch; but who shall watch the spies?  
Them first the bribes, and all your art defies.

What conveniency can they be at a loss for in so knowing an age as the present?

Curiosity in the  
article of wo-  
men's chastity  
pernicious.

Curiosity is vicious every where, but here it is also pernicious; it is a folly to be inquisitive into a disease for which there is no medicine that does not inflame and make it worse; a disease which is made more shameful and more public by the means of jealousy; and the revenge of which wounds our issue more than it heals us. You wither and die in the search of so obscure a proof. How miserable have some of my time been made by having attained to the knowledge of it! If the informer does not apply a remedy and relief at the same time with the discovery, it is an injurious information, and he is more deserving of a stab than a downright liar. We laugh as much at him who takes pains to prevent his being a cuckold, as at him who is really such, and knows it not. The stamp of cuckoldom is so indelible, that he who once has it, always carries it to his grave. The punishment is more expressive of it than the crime. It is to a very fine purpose, to open the curtain and to lift up the quilt to discover our private misfortunes, and to



trumpet them on tragic scaffolds, and such misfortunes too, as only sting us by being reported: for a wife is thought to be good, or a marriage happy, not as they are really so, but because the world is silent about them. A man must be discreet to avoid this tormenting and unprofitable knowledge: and the Romans † when they returned from any journey, used to send notice beforehand of their coming, that their wives might not be surprised. To this purpose it is, that a certain nation introduced a custom, that the priest should on the day of any marriage, unlock the bride's cabinet, to free the husband from the doubt and curiosity of examining, by his first trial, whether she comes a virgin to his bed, or has been violated before.

But the world will be talking. I know a hundred honest gentlemen that are not very much disgraced by being cuckolds. A gallant man is pitied for it, but not despised. Order the matter so, that your virtue may smother your misfortune, that good men may curse the occasion of it, and that he who wrongs you may tremble but to think of it. But who escapes being talked of at the same rate, from the least even to the greatest?

A gentleman is not the less esteemed for being dishonoured by his wife.

‡ ——— *Tot qui legionibus imperitavit,  
Et melior quam tu multis fuit, improbè, rebus §.*

To whose command whole legions once did bow,  
And who (poor wretch) was better far than thou.

You see how many honest men are reproached with this in your presence, and you may be sure that you are not spared behind your back. Nay, the very ladies will be laughing too, and what are they more apt to banter in this virtuous age, than a peaceable and most happy

† Plutarch, in his Treatise of Questions about the Roman Affairs, chap. ix.

‡ The 1041st verse, of which Montaigne quotes the sense rather than the words, is here inserted before the ver. 1039.

§ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 1039, 1041.



Cuckoldom an evil, which one is obliged to keep secret. married couple? There is not a man among you, who has not made somebody a cuckold; for nature deals altogether in retaliation and variety. The frequency of this accident must have lessened the bitterness of it long ago, and it is now past into custom.

Miserable suffering this! which is also aggravated, because improper to be made known.

*Fors etiam nostris invidet questibus aures \*.*

And fortune spitefully denies  
To lend an ear unto our cries.

For to what friend dare you trust your complaints? Who, if he does not laugh at them, will not make use of the occasion as an introduction and instruction to come in for a share of the quarry. Wise folks keep the bitters as well as the sweets of matrimony secret: and among the other teasing articles that are to be met with in this state, to a talkative man as I am, this is the chief, that custom renders it indecent and injurious to communicate to another all that one knows and feels of it.

The jealousy of a wife is very fatal to her husband.

To give the women themselves any advice to disgust them against jealousy would be time lost; their very being is such a compound of suspicion, vanity, and curiosity, that there is no hopes of curing them by lawful means. They often recover themselves out of this infirmity by a form of health, much more to be dreaded than the malady itself. For as there are enchantments which cannot remove the evil but by throwing it upon another, they are glad to transfer this fever to their husbands, when they are rid of it themselves. Nevertheless, to say the truth, I do not know whether a man can suffer a worse thing from them than jealousy; it is the most dangerous of their qualities, as the head is of all the parts of their bodies. Pittacus said †, that “every one  
“ had his vexation; that his was the bad head of his

\* Catullus de Nuptiis Pelei, carm. 62. ver. 170.

† Plutarch of the Peace of Mind, chap. xi.



“ wife ; but for which he should think himself perfectly  
 “ happy.” This, sure, was a very sad inconvenience,  
 with which a person so wise, just, and valiant, found  
 the whole course of his life poisoned ! What then must  
 we little men do ? The senate of Marseilles might well  
 grant the request of him who desired leave to kill him-  
 self, in order to be delivered from the clamour of his  
 wife. For this is a mischief never removed but by car-  
 rying away the piece, and which there is no compound-  
 ing for but by flight or patience ; both of which are hard  
 terms. In my opinion, he was not a novice, who said,  
 that happy was the marriage where the wife was blind,  
 and the husband deaf.

Let us also consider, whether the great and violent severity of the obligation we lay upon them, does not produce two effects contrary to our end, viz. Whether it does not render the gallants more eager to attack, and the women more forward to surrender. For as to the first, by raising the value of the place, we raise the value and desire of the conquest. Who would not think that Venus herself cunningly enhanced the price of her merchandize, by making the laws her bawds, knowing how insipid that pleasure would be which was not heightened by fancy and its dearness ? In short, it is all iwine’s flesh, only varied, as the host of Flaminius said, by different sauce. Cupid is a sly deity, who makes it his sport to contend with devotion and justice. It is his pride that his power gives a shock to every other power, and that all other rules yield to his.

The dangerous consequences of too great a restraint laid on the wife by the husband.

*Materiam culpæ prosequiturque suæ †.*

And seeks fresh fuel for his fire.

As to the second point, should not we be less cuckolds if we less feared to be so, considering the temper of women whose desires are prompted and excited by prohibition ?

† Ovid Trist. lib. iv. eleg. 1. ver. 34.



*Ubi velis nolunt, ubi nolis volunt ultro \*,  
Concessa pudet ire via †.*

In ev'ry varied choice, repugnant still,

They wou'd, you won't, and when you won't, they will.

What better construction can we put on the behaviour of Messalina? She at first cuckolded her husband in private, as is the common practice: but managing her affairs with too much ease, by reason of her husband's stupidity, she on a sudden scorned privacy, scrupled not to carry on her amours in public, owned her humble servants, and entertained and favoured them in the sight of all the world. She aimed to make her husband sensible of it. But nothing of all this being able to rouse the animal, and rendering her pleasures languid and flat, by that stupid facility with which she seemed to authorise and make them lawful, what does she, but, being the wife of a healthy emperor ‡, living at Rome, the theatre of the world, in the face of the sun, and with public feasting and ceremony she one day, as her husband was out of town, married Silius, whom she had enjoyed long before? Does it not seem as if she was going to become chaste through her husband's indifference for her? Or that she desired another husband, who might sharpen her appetite by his jealousy, and by opposing it stir it up? But the first difficulty she met with was also the last. This beast roused on a sudden. These sleepy, sluggish mortals are often the most dangerous. I have known, by experience, that this extreme patience, when it comes to be worn out, produces the most severe revenge; for, by taking fire all on a sudden, anger, and fury combined in one, exert all their efforts at the first discharge;

—— *irarumque omnis effundit habenas* ||.

he put her to death, and with her a great number of her correspondents; even one § whom she had forced to her bed with scourges.

\* Ter. Eunuch, act 4. sect. 7. ver. 43.

† Lucan. lib. ii. ver. 446.

‡ Tacit. Annal. lib. xi. cap. 26, 27, &c.

|| Virg. Æneid. lib. xii. ver.

499. § Mneſter, the comedian, and Traulus Montanus, Tacit. Annal lib. xi. cap. 36.



What Virgil said of Venus and Vulcan was more suitably expressed by Lucretius, of a stolen enjoyment betwixt her and Mars.

— *belli fera munera Mavors,  
Armipotens regit, in gremium qui sæpe tuum se  
Rejicit, æterno devinctus vulnere amoris:  
Atque ita suspiciens tereti cervice reposta  
Pascit amore avidos inbians in te, dea, visus  
Eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore:  
Hunc tu, diva, tuo recubantem corpore sancto  
Circunfusa super, suaveis ex ore loquelæ  
Funde \*.*

— for furious Mars,  
The only governor and god of wars,  
With thee enamoured doth oft resort  
To taste the pleasures of the Paphian court;  
Where, on thy bosom, he supinely lies,  
Panting, and drinking love, at both his eyes;  
Sucking thy balmy breath with eager kifs,  
And rushing to enjoy yet greater blifs;  
Then, while thy tender limbs about him move,  
Involv'd and fetter'd in the clasps of love,  
Thy charms in that transporting moment try,  
And softest language to his heart apply.

When I consider these words †, *Rejicit, pascit, inbians, pendet*, and that word *circumfusa*, from whence *infusus* is nobly derived, I have a contempt for those little witticisms and verbal allusions which have started up since.

Those good poets stood in need of no smart subtle turn of phrase. Their language is copious, and full of a natural and constant spirit. It is altogether epigrammatical; with a sting not only in the tail, but in the head, stomach,

A lively description of the amours of Venus and Mars, more natural than that which represents the transports of Vulcan for Venus.

What constitutes true eloquence.

\* Lucret. lib. i. ver. 33, &c. † All these words so natural and expressive; some of them in the passage out of Virgil, mentioned in one of the preceding passages of this chapter, and the rest in the quotation here inserted.



and feet. There is nothing forced in it, nothing drawling, and it ever keeps the same pace, without variation *Contextus totus virilis est, non sunt circa flosculos occupati* \*, “the whole texture of it is manly, without the ornament of flowers.” It is not an eloquence merely delicate and inoffensive: it is nervous and solid; and not only pleases, but actually engrosses and captivates, and the finest understandings are the most charmed with it. When I see those sublime forms of expression so lively, so profound, I do not say it is well uttered, but well conceived. It is the sprightliness of the imagination that gives pomp and sublimity to the language. *Pectus est quod disertum facit* †, “eloquence is owing to the frame of the mind.” Our people call language judgment, and fine words, full conceptions. This painting is not so much owing to the dexterity of hand, as to the lively impression of the object on the mind. Gallus’s language is simple, because his conception is simple. Horace is not content with a superficial expression; that would betray him; he sees into things farther and more clearly. His wit breaks into, and rummages the whole magazine of words and figures to represent his thoughts, and he must have terms to express himself, which are more than ordinary, because such is his conception. Plutarch says that he knew the Latin tongue by things ‡: So here, the sense illuminates and produces the words, which are no longer words of air, but of flesh and bone. They signify more than they express. The novices in a language have also some idea of this. For in Italy I said whatever I had a mind to in common discourse; but in serious subjects I did not dare to trust to an idiom, which I could not turn and wind out of its common path. I was for introducing something of my own.

\* Seneca, epist. 33. † Quintilian, lib. x. ‡ In the Life of Demosthenes, chap. 1. I began to take Latin authors in hand, says he, very late, being far advanced in the decline of life, when an odd thing happened to me, which is nevertheless true, viz. That I did not so much learn to understand things by the words, as I came to understand the words, in some degree, by the use and knowledge I had of the things thereby signified.



Men of wit set off a language by their way of handling and managing it; not so much innovating it, as by putting it to more vigorous and various services, and straining and bending it to them. They do not introduce new terms into it, but they enrich those they have already, give them more weight, spirit, and energy; and add new turns, which are however authoris'd by the wise and ingenious application, which they are not at a loss to make of them. This is the end which all should have in view, who are ambitious of writing well; and as for those who have not genius to attain to it, they ought to think of something else. And indeed how few have a sufficiency of this talent, is evident from the many French scribblers of the age. They are too bold and haughty to follow the common road; but the want of invention and discretion ruins them. There is nothing to be seen in their writings, but a wretched affectation of a strange novelty of style, with cold and absurd disguises, which, instead of elevating the subject, depresses it. Provided they can but trick up themselves with new-fangled terms, they care not what they avail; and, for the sake of bringing in a new word, though it be by head and shoulders, they leave out the common one, though often more nervous and significant.

Wits enrich language, and give it fresh vigour.

I find stuff enough in our language, but there is some fault in the modelling of it; for there is nothing that might not be made out of our terms of hunting and war, which is a fruitful soil to borrow from: and the forms of speech, like herbs, improve and grow stronger by being transplanted. I think the language copious enough, but not sufficiently pliable and vigorous. It commonly flags under a powerful conception. If you are upon the sublime, you often perceive it languishes and droops under you, and that then Latin steps into its relief, as Greek does to other languages. We do not easily discern the energy of some of those words which I have selected, because the common use of them has, in some measure, impaired their beauty, and rendered it vulgar; as is the case in our common

Montaigne's opinion of the French language.



talk, wherein there are excellent phrases and metaphors, the beauty of which is faded by their being antiquated, and their lustre sullied by too common handling. But this abates nothing of the relish to men of understanding, neither does it derogate from the glory of those ancient authors who, it is likely, first brought those words into that lustre.

The sciences are treated of with too much art.

The sciences treat of things with too much refinement, and in an artificial manner, very different from that which is common and natural. My page makes love, and understands it; but read to him Leo, the Hebrew, and Ficinus, where they treat of the lover, his thoughts and his actions, and he knows nothing at all of the matter. I discover in Aristotle most of my common impulses, which are there covered and cloathed in another robe for the use of the schools. Well may they speed; but, were I of the profession, I would naturalize art as much as artify nature. Let us leave Bembo and Equicola where we found them.

Why Montaigne chose to have no books by him but Plutarch while he was writing.

When I write I care not for the company and the remembrance of books, lest they should break into my plan: and to say the truth, good authors too much debase and discourage me. I am very much of the mind of that painter who, having made a wretched figure of some cocks, charged his boys not to suffer any natural cock to come into his shop; and, in order to give myself a little lustre, had need rather of the invention of the musician Antimonydes, who, when he was to perform a piece of music, took care that the auditory should either before, or after him be entertained with some other sorry songsters. But I can hardly be without a Plutarch; he is so universal and copious, that upon all occasions, and whatever extravagant subject you pitch upon, he is officious to supply your necessity, and stretches out a liberal hand to you with an inexhaustible store of riches and embellishments. It vexes me that he is so liable to be plundered by those who are conversant with him. I can no sooner make an acquaintance with him but I purloin either a leg or a wing from him.



For this design of mine I find it also very proper to write at home, in a wild country, where nobody assists or relieves me, where I seldom see a man that understands the Latin of his Pater-noster, or as little, if so much of the French. I might have performed better elsewhere, but then the work would not have been so much my own; its chief aim and perfection being to be exactly mine. I should be apt enough to correct some accidental errors, of which I am full, as I write on inadvertently; but as for my common and constant imperfections it would be a kind of treason to expunge them. When any one tells me, or I say to myself, "Thou art too full of figures; that is a word of the Gascon growth; that is a dangerous phrase (I do not reject any that are used in the common streets of France; it is mere jest to think of opposing custom with grammar) that is an ignorant discourse; a paradoxical sentence; that there is too silly; you often make yourself merry; it will be thought you say a thing in good earnest, which you only speak in jest." Very true, say I; but I correct the errors of inadvertency, not those of custom. Do I not talk at the same rate throughout? Do not I represent myself to the life? It is enough I have done what I designed. Every body discovers me in my book, and my book in me.

Now I have an apish imitating quality. When I used to set about writing verses (though I never made any but Latin) they plainly discovered the poet I had read last; and some of my first essays have a taste that is a little exotic. At Paris I speak a language somewhat different from what I do at Montaigne. Whatever I look upon with attention, easily leaves some impression of it upon me. Whatever I examine I make my own, whether a silly countenance, a disagreeable grimace, or a ridiculous way of speaking; and vices most of all, as they seize and stick to me, and will not leave their hold without shaking off. I swear oftner by imitation than humour. A cruel imitation like that of the apes, so terrible in stature and strength, which Alexander met with

Why he chose to write at home, where he had none to help him.

Montaigne very apt to imitate.



in a certain country of the Indies, and which it would have been difficult for him to have mastered any other way. But they afforded him the means, by this their inclination to counterfeit whatever they saw done \*. For thereby the pursuers learnt to put on shoes in their sight, and to tie them fast with many knots, to muffle up their heads in caps altogether composed of running nooses, and to make as if they anointed their eyes with glue. Thus did those poor animals employ their mimicking humour indiscreetly to their own detriment. They glued up their own eyes, hamstringed, and bound themselves. The other faculty of mimicking the words and gesture of a person purposely to raise mirth and admiration, is no more in my power than in that of a stock. When I swear in my own manner, it is only by God, which of all oaths is the most strict. † They say that Socrates swore by his dog; Zeno by that same interjection which is at this time in use among the Italians, viz. *Cappari*; and Pythagoras ‡ by water and air. I am so apt, without thinking of it, to receive these superficial impressions, that if I had in my youth Sire or Highness three days together, I would repeat them a week after, instead of Excellency and Lordship; and what I say one day in sport and in jest, I shall repeat next day seriously. Therefore in writing I am fonder of trite arguments, lest I should handle them at another's expence. Every subject is equally fertile to me. A fly will serve me for a subject; and it is well if what I have now in hand may not have been undertaken at the command of as rambling a will. Let me begin with that which I like best; for the subjects are all linked to one another.

\* *Ælian de Animal. lib. xvii. cap. 25. and Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1023.*

† *ὁ μὲν δὲ (φασὶ) καὶ κάππαριν καθάπερ Σωκράτης τὴν κύνα*, Diogenes Laert. lib. vii. § 32. *Capparis* is the name of a shrub bearing capers; others swore by a cabbage, as is the custom in France, even at this day; witness the word *vertuchou*, a kind of oath, which signifies by the virtue of cabbage; an expression which many people make use of every now and then.

‡ Diogenes Laert. in the life of Pythagoras. lib. viii. sect. 6.

But



But I am vexed that my deepest, and most ridiculous reveries, yet such as please me best, are produced on a sudden, and when I look for them the least; and that they as suddenly vanish, for want of something at that instant to apply them to; be it on horseback, at table, or in bed; though I am most given to think when I am riding.

He generally produced his profoundest thoughts on a sudden.

My speech is a little nicely jealous of attention and silence if I am engaged in a discourse. Whoever then interrupts me puts me to a stand. In a journey the very necessities wanting on the road break off discourse; besides that I often travel without the company fit for such regular conversation; by which means I have all the leisure I would desire to entertain myself. It falls out to me as it does with my dreams. Whilst I am dreaming I recommend them to my memory (for I am apt to dream that I dream) but next day I may well enough call to mind what complexion they were of, whether gay, or sad, or wild; but what they were as to the rest, the more I strive to recollect, the deeper I plunge it in oblivion. So of thoughts that come accidentally into my head, I have no more than a vain image remaining in my memory; only enough to tease and vex me in a fruitless search after them.

Did not like to be interrupted as he was speaking.

Now therefore, laying books aside, and to speak more to the purpose and the truth, I find after all, that love is nothing but the thirst of the enjoyment of it in a desired subject, and that Venus is nothing more than the pleasure of discharging the vessels; like the pleasure that nature gives us in the discharge of the other parts, which becomes vicious by being either immoderate or indiscreet. According to Socrates, love is the appetite of generation by the intervention of beauty. And, having often considered the ridiculous titillation of this pleasure, the absurd, hairbrained, and senseless motions with which it agitates Zeno and Crasippus, the indiscreet rage, the countenance inflamed with fury and cruelty, in the sweetest act of love; and then that sour,  
grave,

What love is; how it renders a man ridiculous, and like to the beasts,



grave, and ecstatic one in an action so wanton ; that our delights and our excrements are promiscuously shuffled together, and that the highest pleasure is, like pain attended with fainting and complaining, I think it true what Plato says, that man was made by the Gods for their sport \*.

———(*quænam ista jocandi  
Sævitia †?*)

What a strange sporting cruelty is this?

and that it is in derision that nature has ordered the most common of our actions to be the most troublesome ; thereby to make us equal, and to parallel fools and wise men, beasts and us. When I imagine the most contemplative and prudent man, in this situation, I think he has consummate impudence to pretend to be prudent and contemplative. The pride of the peacock is mortified by its legs.

———*ridentem dicere verum,  
Quid vetat ‡?*

Why may not truth in laughing guise be drest?

They who in their sports banish serious thoughts, are, says one, like the person who fears to adore the statue of a saint if it be stark naked. We eat and drink indeed as beasts do ; but these are not actions that obstruct the functions of our soul. In those we maintain our advantage over them. This subjects every other thought to it : and, by its imperious authority, makes an ass of all Plato's divinity and philosophy, and yet there is no complaint of it. In every thing else you may preserve a sort of decorum : all other operations submit to the rules of honesty ; this cannot so much as in imagination appear other than vicious or ridiculous. Examine if you can therein

\* Ἀνθρώπου Θεὸς τὴν καὶ γυναικὸς εἶναι, De Legibus, lib. vii. p. 889.

† Claud. in Eutrop. lib. i. ver. 24, 25.

‡ Hor. sat. i. lib. i. ver. 24, 25.



find a wise and discreet proceeding. Alexander said, that this performance and sleeping were the chief actions by which he knew himself to be mortal †. Sleep suffocates and suppresses the faculties of our soul; the exercise with the sex absorbs and dissipates them in like manner. Doubtless, it is a mark not only of our original corruption, but also of our vanity and deformity.

Nature impels us to it on the one hand, by having attached to this desire the most noble, useful, and pleasant of all her functions; and, on the other hand, she leaves us to accuse and avoid it as a thing insolent and indecent, to blush at it, and to recommend abstinence. Are not we brutes to call that operation brutish which begets us? People of various religions have concurred in several ceremonies, as sacrifices, lamps, burning incense, fastings, oblations, and among others in the condemnation of this action. All opinions center in this, besides the antiquated practice of circumcision. We have perhaps cause to blame ourselves for contributing to so silly a production as man, if we call the act and the parts that are employed in it shameful; as mine are properly so at this time. The Essenians, of whom Pliny speaks, kept up ‡ their nation several ages, without nurses or cradles, by the arrival of foreigners, who, following this pretty humour, came among them continually; a whole nation running the hazard of total extinction, rather than engage themselves in female embraces, and rather to lose a succession of men than to beget one. They say that Zeno § never had to do with a woman but once in his whole life, and then out of civility that he might not be deemed a woman-hater. Every one shuns the sight of a birth; every one runs to see an

Why is love, with which nature inspires us to be condemned.

† Plutarch, in his Tract of the Means to distinguish the Flatterer from the Friend, chap. 23.

‡ “Gens sola, et in toto orbe præter cæteras mira, sine ullâ sæminâ, omni Venere abdicatâ.—In diem ex æquo concubarum turberenascitur, large frequentibus quos vitâ fessos ad mores eorum fortunæ fluctus agitat. Ita per sæculorum millia (incredibile dictu) gens æterna est, in quâ nemo nascitur.” Nat. Hist. lib. v. cap. 17.

§ Diog. Laert. in the Life of Zeno, lib. vii. § 13.



execution. To destroy, a spacious field is fought out, and that in the face of the sun; but to beget, we creep into as dark and close a corner as we can. It is a man's duty to withdraw himself from the light to do it; but it is his glory, and the fountain of many virtues, to be able to destroy it. The one is an injury, the other a favour; for Aristotle said, that to do any one good was, according to a proverb in his country, to kill him. The Athenians, for the sake of paralleling the disgust of those two actions, being to cleanse the island of Delos, and to justify themselves to Apollo, prohibited all births and burials in the precincts thereof. † *Nostri nosmet pœnitet*; "we are ashamed of ourselves.

There are people who do not care that any should see them eat.

There are nations where the people do not love to be seen to eat. I know a lady, and of the greatest quality too, who thinks also that chewing gives a disagreeable air to the face, which takes off much of its grace and beauty; and therefore she does not care to appear in public with an appetite: and I know a man too who cannot bear to see another, or be seen himself to eat; and is more shy of company to see him in the act of repletion than that of evacuation.

Turkish mad men, who are proud to debase their own nature.

In the Turkish empire there are a great many men, who aiming to be thought more excellent than others, never suffer themselves to be seen when they are at their meals, who make but one in a week, who cut and mangle their face and members, and never speak to any one: a frantic people, who think to honour their nature by being unnatural to it, who value themselves, upon despising themselves, and become better by growing worse. What a monster is the animal that becomes horrible to himself; whose delights are his plagues, and who sticks to misfortune!

† Seneca tells his friend Lucilius, in his 115th epistle, that he would reap a very considerable advantage from philosophy, viz. that he would never be ashamed of himself; and it is not unlikely that this passage ran in Montaigne's head, though he employs it in a sense quite different.



There are some who hide themselves as long as they live:

*Exilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant ;  
Atque alio patriam quærunt sub sole jacentem\*.*

Leaving their native seats, in exile run  
To lands that lie beneath another sun.

stealing from the sight of other men ; and avoid health and chearfulness, as qualities that are prejudicial, and enemies to the human being. Not only many sects, but many individuals, curse their birth, and bless their death ; and there is a place where the sun is abhorred, and darkness adored. We are only ingenious to use ourselves ill. In quest of this game we employ all our wit, which is a dangerous tool if it be used intemperately.

Men who conceal themselves from sight, and are ingenious in using themselves ill.

*O miseri quorum gaudia crimen habent ¶ !*

O wretched man, whose very joys are crimes !

Alas ! poor man ! thou hast misfortunes enough that are unavoidable, without stretching thy invention to increase them ; and art miserable enough by constitution, without being so by art ; thou hast real and essential deformities enough, without forging such as are imaginary. Dost thou think thyself too easy in thy circumstances if one half of thy enjoyments does not disquiet thee ? Dost thou think that thou hast performed all the necessary offices to which thou art engaged by nature : and that she is idle in thee if thou dost not oblige thyself to new offices ? Thou dost not scruple to offend her universal and undoubted laws, and art very tenacious of thy own favourite whimsies, which, the more particular, uncertain, and repugnant they are, the more pains thou dost take in their favour. Thou art attached to the positive laws of thy parish, but those of the world concern thee not. Run but a little over the examples of this kind ; thy whole life is full of them.

\* Virg. Geo. lib. ii. ver. 511.

¶ Cornel. Gal. elog. 1. ver. 138.



To talk discreetly of love only stimulates it the more.

In my opinion, the verses of those two poets, in treating so reservedly and discreetly of lasciviousness, discover it, and lay it fuller in view. The ladies cover their breasts with net-work, as the priests do several sacred things; and painters throw a shade over their works to give them the greater lustre: and the sun and wind are said to strike more violently by reflection than in a direct line. When the Egyptian was asked, what he carried so secretly under his cloak; he gravely answered, it is hid under my cloak §, to the end that thou mightest not know what it is. But there are some other things that are hid only on purpose to be shewn. Hear this man who speaks plainer.

*Et nudam pressi corpus adusque meum* \*.

And in these naked arms of mine  
Her naked body I did twine.

Methinks I am emasculated by this expression. If Martial turn up Venus, coats ever so high, he cannot shew her in such perfection. He who says all that might be said, surfeits and disgusts us. He who is afraid to speak out, inclines one to think more of the matter than there is in reality. There is a kind of treachery in this sort of modesty, and especially whilst they half open, as they do, so fair a path to imagination. And both the action and the description must shew they are stolen.

The love of the Spaniards and the Italians; the more respectful and timorous it is, the more agreeable.

The love of the Spaniards and Italians the more respectful and timorous, the more coy and secret it is, the better it pleases me. I know not which of the ancients it was who wished his weasand as long as the neck of a † crane, that he might be the longer in tasting what he swallowed. Such a wish would have been more proper in this pleasure, which is so quick and precipitant, especially in such

§ Plutarch, of Curiosity, chap. 3.  
ver. 24.

\* Ovid. de Amor. lib. i. eleg. 5.  
† See in Athenæus, lib. i. cap. 6.



natures as mine, which has the fault of being too sudden in its motion. To stop its flight, and delay it with preambles, a wink, a bow, a word, a sign, stand all for favour and recompence betwixt them. Would it not be excellent frugality in him that could dine on the steam of roast-meat?

It is a passion in which solidity has very little share, but vanity and a feverish dotage much greater; and it must be recompensed and served in the same manner.

Love ought to be made gradually, and without precipitation.

We teach the ladies to value and esteem themselves, and to amuse and cheat us. We give the last discharge at the first onset. The French impetuosity always attends it. By spinning out their favours, and exposing them in small parcels, even wretched old age finds some share of them, according to a man's value and merit. He who has no fruition but in fruition, who wins nothing unless he sweep the stakes, who only loves the chase for the sake of the quarry, has no business to come to our school. The more steps and gradations there are, the uppermost feat is the higher, and the more honourable. We should take a pleasure in being conducted to it, as is the way in magnificent palaces, by divers porticos and passages, long and pleasant galleries, and by many turnings and windings. This management would redound to our advantage. We should then stay longer and love longer. Without hope, and without desire, our progress is not worth a rush. Our conquest and entire possession is what they ought always to dread. When they surrender themselves up to the mercy of our fidelity and constancy, they run not a little hazard. These are virtues rare and hard to attain to. They are no sooner ours but we are no more theirs.

— *postquam cupidæ mentis satiata libido est,  
Verba nihil metuere, nihil perjuriam curant* \*.

When our desires and lusts once fated are  
For oaths and promises we nothing care.

\* Catullus de Nuptiis Pelei et Thetidis, carm. 62. ver. 147.



Thraſonides, a young man of Greece, was ſo fond of his amour that, having gained his miſtreſs's heart, he reſuſed to enjoy her, that he might not by fruition conſume, quench, and ſatiate that uneaſy paſſion, of which he boated, and with which he fed his fancy. The dearneſs of a diſh heightens the reliſh of it.

Kiſſes rendered contemptible by being too common in ſalutes.

Do but obſerve how much the faſhion of ſaluting, which is peculiar to our nation, does, by the facility of granting them, rob kiſſes of that charm which Socrates ſaid is ſo powerful and dangerous for ſtealing our hearts. It is a diſagreeable and offenſive faſhion for the ladies that they muſt be obliged to lend their lips to every man that has three footmen to attend him, be his perſon ever ſo diſgulting.

|| *Cujus livida naribus caninis  
Dependet glacies, rigetque barba :*

\* \* \* \* \*  
*Centum occurrore malo cunnilingis ¶.*

Nor are we ourſelves at all gainers by the bargain ; for as the world is divided we are obliged to kiſs fifty ugly faces for three beauties ; and to tender ſtomachs, like thoſe of my age, a bad kiſs is too dear a purchaſe for a good one.

In Italy they paſſionately court, and even fall into raptures of devotion to the very women who prostitute themſelves for money ; and juſtify their conduct by pleading that there are degrees of fruition, and that they pay them ſo much compliment with a deſire of obtaining that fruition which is the moſt entire. The women only ſell their bodies : their wills are too free, and too much their own to be put to ſale. Therefore, ſay theſe gentlemen, it is the will they aim at, and ſo far they are in the right. It is the will that muſt be obliged and managed. I ſhould abhor to think that mine was a body deprived of affection. This madneſs is, methinks, a-kin to that

|| Martial. lib. vii. epig. 94.

¶ The Latin is the only language that is ſo licentious as to convey ideas ſo groſs and naſty. Seneca ſays it is better to ſuppreſs ſome things in ſilence, though it be to the detriment of the cauſe, rather than to tranſgreſs the bounds of modeſty. Senec. Controverſ. lib. i. Controv. 2. towards the end,



of the \* boy, who longed to ravish the beautiful image of Venus, which was carved by Praxiteles; or that of the furious Egyptian, who violated the dead corpse of a woman that he was embalming; which gave occasion to the law † made afterwards in Egypt, that the bodies of beautiful young women, and those of a good family, should be kept three days before they were put into the hands of those persons who had the charge of their interment. Periander acted more wonderfully, who extended his conjugal affection (more regularly and legal) to the enjoyment of his wife Melissa after she was dead ¶. Does it not seem a lunatic humour in the moon, when she could no otherwise enjoy her darling Endymion, to lay him asleep for several months, and to please herself with the fruition of a boy, who stirred not but in a dream? I likewise say, that to love a body without its consent and without its desire, is to love a body without a soul. All enjoyments are not the same. There are some that are hectic and languishing. A thousand other causes, besides good will, may procure us this grant from the ladies. This is not a sufficient testimony of affection. Treachery may lurk there as well as elsewhere. They go to it sometimes but with half a mind.

*Tanquam thura merumque parent ‡,  
Absentem marmoreamve putes ||.*

So coldly they the sacrifice prepare,  
You'd think they absent, or else marble are.

I know some ladies who had rather lend that than their coach, and who only impart themselves that way. You are to observe whether your company pleases them upon any other account, or only for that same, the endowment of some strong-chined groom; and in what degree of favour you stand with them.

\* "Venerem Praxiteles in marmore quasi spirantem in templo Gu-  
diorum collocavit, propter pulchritudinem operis, a libidinoso cujus-  
dam complexu parum tutam." Valer. Max. lib. viii. cap. 11. in Exter-  
nis § 4. † Herodot. lib. ii. p. 136. ¶ Diog. Laertius, in the  
Life of Periander, lib. i. § 96. ‡ Mart. lib. xi. ep. 105. ver. 12.  
|| Id. lib. xi. ep. 61. ver. 8.



— *tibi si datur uni.*

*Quo lapide illo diem candidiore nolet †.*

Whether thy mistress favour thee alone,  
And mark thy day out with the whiter stone.

What if she sops the bread she eats of yours in the sauce  
of a more pleasing imagination ?

*Te tenet, absentes alios suspirat amores ‡.*

While in her arms intwin'd you don't discover  
She pants with longing for an absent lover.

What? Have we not known a man in our own times who  
made this act subservient to a horrid piece of revenge, by  
that means to poison and kill an honest woman ? They  
who know Italy will never think it strange if I seek not  
elsewhere for instances of this kind. For that nation may

In France there be called the mistress of the world in this  
are as many respect. They have generally finer wo-  
 charming wo- men, and fewer ordinary ones than we;  
men and men of but for uncommon and excellent beauties  
uncommon me- merit as in Italy. I reckon that we are upon a par. I form  
the same judgment of the wits of the common class, of  
which it is plain that they have many more. Brutality  
is, without comparison, more uncommon there. As for  
singular geniuses, and those of the first rate, we are not  
at all indebted to them. Were I to extend the compa-  
rison, I think I might say as to prowess, it is with us  
popular and natural, contrary to what it is with them;  
but we have seen it sometimes in their hands to a de-  
gree so full and vigorous that it surpasses the greatest  
instances we have of it.

The inconveni-  
encies of the too  
great restraints  
in which the Ita-  
lians keep their  
wives.

The marriages of that country are very  
unhappy upon this account: their custom  
commonly imposes so harsh and slavish a  
law upon their wives, that the most re-  
mote acquaintance with a stranger is as  
great a crime with them as the closest; the consequence

† Catull. ad Manlium, carm. 66. ver. 147. ‡ Tibull. lib. i. el. 6. ver. 35.



Of which law is, that all reproaches become necessarily substantial; and, since all comes to the same account, they have a very easy choice to make. And, when they have broke down those fences, depend on it they are all on fire, *Luxuria ipsis vinculis, sicut fera bestia, irritata, deinde emissa*; “lust, like a wild beast, being enraged by “being bound, breaks from its chain.” It is necessary they should have a little more rein.

*Vidi ego nuper equum contra sua fræna tenacem  
Ore reluctanti fulminis ire modo\*.*

I saw, spite of his bit, a head-strong colt  
Run with his rider like a thunderbolt.

The desire of company is abated by giving it some liberty. It is a fine custom we have in our nation that our children are admitted into good families, to be entertained and bred up pages as in a school of nobility. And it is looked upon as an incivility and an affront to refuse a gentleman. I have taken notice (for so many families, so many different styles and forms) that the ladies who have chosen to subject the maids of their retinue to the most austere rules, have had no better luck than those who have allowed them greater liberty. There is a necessity for using moderation. A good part of their conduct should be left to their discretion; for when all comes to all, there is no discipline that can totally restrain them. But it is very true, that she who comes off safe and sound from a school of liberty, is more to be trusted than she who comes away sound from a severe and cloistered education.

Our ancestors formed the countenances of their daughters to bashfulness and fear (their courage and desires being always alike), we ours to assurance. We understand nothing of the matter. This is the business of the Sarmatian ladies, who are not allowed to lie with a man till they have killed another in battle with their own hands. For me, who have no other demand upon them than that they would give me hearing, it is sufficient if they retain me for council ac-

Modesty necessary to women.

\* Ovid. Amor. lib. iii. eleg. 4. ver. 13, 14.



according to the privilege of my age. I advise them, therefore, as well as my own sex, to abstinence; but, if the times we live in will not admit of this, let them be at least discreet and modest. For as Aristippus\* is reported to have said to certain young men, that blushed at seeing him go into a bawdy-house, the crime is not in going in, but in not coming out. Let her that has no care of her conscience, have some regard however for her character; and, though she be rotten within, let her carry a fair outside.

Montaigne's  
taste as to the  
article of love.

I commend a gradation and length of time in the bestowing of their favours. Plato shews that, in all sorts of love, facility and readiness are prohibited to the defendants. For the women to yield so entirely and rashly, without fear or wit, discovers a greedy appetite, which they ought, with all their art, to conceal. By their orderly and regular deportment in their grant of their favours, they much more whet our desire, and hide their own. Let them always fly before us; I mean those who wish nevertheless to be overtaken. They conquer us the better by flight, like the Scythians. In truth, according to the law that nature has imposed on them, it is not properly their prerogative, either to will or desire: their part is to suffer, obey, and consent; for which nature has given them a perpetual capacity, which in us is uncertain. They have always their call, to the end that they may be always ready for ours. *Pati natæ*†; “they are born to be passive:” and whereas she has ordered that our appetites should be manifested by a prominent shew and declaration of it, she has caused theirs to be hidden and internal, and furnished them with parts improper for ostentation, and such as are merely defensive. Such proceedings as this that follows must be left to the Amazonian licence. Alexander, passing through Hyrcania, Thalestris, queen of the Amazons, met him with three hundred light-horse, of her own sex,

\* Diog. Laert. in the life of Aristippus, lib. ii. § 69.

† These two words are taken out of Seneca, who, speaking of the women of his time, says, that the sex born of the passive gender was as lustful as that of the active gender, epist. 95.



finely mounted and well armed, having left the remainder of a great army that followed her, behind the neighbouring hills; and when she came into his presence, she spoke aloud to him, and said, "That the fame of his victories  
"and valour had brought her thither to see him, and to  
"make him an offer of her forces to assist him in his en-  
"terprizes; and that, finding him so handsome, young,  
"and vigorous, she, who was also perfect in all those qua-  
"lities\*, advised him that they might lie together, to  
"the end that, from the most valiant woman in the world,  
"and the most valiant man then living, there might here-  
"after spring some great and wonderful issue." Alexander thanked her, and, to give time for the accomplishment of her demand, he stayed there thirteen days, which were spent with as much mirth as possible to welcome so heroic a princess.

We are, almost in every instance, unjust judges of their actions as they are of ours. I pay the same acknowledgment to the truth, when it makes against me, as when it is on my side. It is an abominable intemperance that prompts them so often to change, and that hinders them from limiting their affection to any one person whatsoever, as is evident in that goodness, to whom are attributed so many changes, and so many different paramours. But it is true at the same time, that it is contrary to the nature of love, if it be not violent, and contrary to the nature of violence, if it be constant. And they who make it a wonder, who exclaim against it, and make such an inquiry into the causes of this frailty of theirs, as if it were unnatural and incredible, whence happens it that they do not perceive how often they are themselves guilty of the same without any astonishment or miracle at all? It would, perhaps, be more strange to see the passion fixed. It is not

Why in love  
it is wrong for  
the men to  
blame the le-  
vity and incon-  
stancy of the  
women.

\* Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xvii. cap. 16. But this historian does not say that this queen of the Amazons offered Alexander troops, to aid him in his military expeditions: and Quintus Curtius, lib. vi. § 5. says expressly, that Alexander having asked her if she would go to the wars with him, she excused herself by saying, that she had left nobody to be guardian of her kingdom; "Causata, sine custode regnum reliquisse."



a passion merely corporeal. If there be no end in avarice and ambition, there is no end neither in carnal concupiscence. It exists even after satiety; and it is impossible to prescribe either lasting satisfaction, or end to it. It always longs for something unpossessed; and yet inconstancy is, perhaps, somewhat more pardonable in them than in us. They may plead, as well as we, the inclination to variety and novelty, which is common to both sexes; and secondly they might plead, whether we will admit it or not, that they buy a pig in a poke. Joan, queen of Naples \*, caused Andreosso, her first husband, to be hanged at the bars of her window in a halter of gold and silk, wove with her own hand, because that in the matrimonial duties she found he had not the parts, and could not make the efforts answerable to the expectation she had conceived from his stature, beauty, youth, and disposition, whereby she had been caught and deceived. There is more labour required in doing than in suffering; so that they are on their part always at least provided for the supply of our exigency, but it may happen otherwise on our part. For this reason Plato wisely made a law, that before every marriage, in order to prove its fitness, certain judges should view the youths, who claimed it, stark naked, and the women naked too, but not lower than the waist. In their trial of us, perhaps, they do not find us worthy of their choice.

*Experta latus madidoque simillima lero  
Inguina, nec lassâ stare coacta manu  
Deserit imbelles thalamos †.*

'Tis not enough that the will be good. Impotency and insufficiency are lawful reasons for dissolving a marriage.

\* Andrew, the son of Charles king of Hungary, and the husband of Joan I. queen of Naples. The Italians called him Andreosso. As to the tragical death of this prince, see Bayle's Dictionary, in the article of JOAN I. of Naples. † As was the case of Galla mentioned in Martial (lib. vii. ep. 57. ver. 3. &c.) who, being dissatisfied with six or seven husbands whom she quitted, was likewise deceived by other husbands equally deficient.



*Et quærundum aliunde foret nervosius illud,  
Quod posset zonam solvere virginæam \*.*

And why should not she look out for an amorous being more licentious and active according to her own standard?

———*si blando nequeat superesse labori †.*

The pleasing labour if he can't perform.

But is it not great impudence to bring our insufficiency and impotency to the place where we desire to give pleasure, and to leave a good opinion and character of ourselves? For the little that I am able to do now,

———*ad unum  
Mollis opus ||.*

But once a night.

I would not tease a person whom I esteem and fear to offend,

———*fuge suspicari  
Cu us undenum trepidavit ætas  
Claudere lustrum §.*

Let not your mind indulge suspicious fears  
Of him who trembling draws to threescore years.

Nature ought to be satisfied with having rendered this age miserable, without exposing it also to ridicule. I hate to see it, for one poor inch of pitiful vigour which warms thrice a week, to strut and push on with as much eagerness as if it had length and strength to perform mighty feats, which end in a mere blaze of flax; and wonder to see its violent itching so suddenly chilled and extinguished. This is an appetite which can be in none but the flower of beautiful youth. If you trust to nature, expecting she will second that indefatigable, full, constant, and magnanimous ardour which is in you, she will certainly

\* Catullus ad januam mæchæ cujusdam, carm. 65. ver. 27, 28.

† Georg. lib. iii. ver. 127.

|| Hor. epod. lib. xii. ver. 15, 16.

§ Horace, lib. ii. ode 4. ver. 22.



leave you in the lurch. Return it therefore, boldly to some tender, bashful, and ignorant boy, who still trembles under the lash and blushes at it.

*Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro  
Si quis ebur, vel mista rubent ubi lilia, mixta  
Alba rosâ\*.*

So Indian iv'ry, stain'd with crimson, flows,  
Or lilies white, mix'd with the damask rose.

He who can, without hanging down his head for very shame, expect next day to face the disdain of those fair eyes conscious of his fumbling impertinence,

*Et taciti fecere tamen convicia vultus †.*

— and, tho' she nothing says,  
How ill she lik'd my work her look betrays.

he never felt the satisfaction and pride of having tired them, and tarnished their lustre, by the vigorous performance of one active heroic night. When I have observed any one of them to be disgusted with me, I have not presently accused her levity, but have been in doubt if I had not reason rather to find fault with nature, which has certainly treated me very unkindly and unjustly,

*(Si non longa satis, si non bene mentula crassa :  
Nimirum sapiunt videntque parvum  
Matronæ quoque mentulam illibenter ‡).*

and done me a most enormous prejudice. Every member I have is equally mine, as much one as another; and no other more properly makes me a man than this.

\* Æneid, lib. xii. ver. 67.

† Ovid Amor. lib. i. eleg. 7. ver. 22.

‡ Of these three verses the first is the beginning of a sort of epigram, entitled, Priapus in Veterum Poetarum Catalectis, and the two others are taken from one of the first epigrams of the same book, Ad Matronas, composed of five verses, two of which are parodied by Montaigne.



I ought to give the public my picture entire, with all its lights and shades. The wise part of my lecture wholly consists in truth, liberty, and essence; disdaining to admit those little feigned, common, and provincial rules into the catalogue of its real duties; it is altogether natural, constant, and general; of which civility and ceremony are daughters indeed, but spurious. We are sure we shall have the appearance of vices when we shall have had them in reality. When we have done with these we run full drive upon others, if we find it must be so: for there is danger that we fancy new duties, to excuse our neglect of the natural ones, and so confound them. That such is the case, it is visible that in places where mistakes are mischiefs, the mischiefs are only mistakes: that in nations where the laws of decency are most rare and most remiss, the primitive rules of common reason are best observed; such numberless duties stifling and dissipating all our care. The application to trifling things diverts our attention from those which justly require it. What an easy, plausible course do these superficial men take, compared with ours! These are shadows, wherewith we palliate and pay one another. But, instead of paying, we inflame the reckoning towards that great judge, who tucks up our rags and tatters round our pudenda, and thoroughly scrutinizes every part of us, even to those that are the inmost and most secret. It were a decent and useful quality of our virgin modesty, could it prevent this discovery. In fine, he that could reclaim man from so scrupulous a verbal superstition, would do the world no great damage. Our life is divided betwixt folly and prudence. Whoever writes nothing of it but what is reverend and regular, leaves above one half behind. I do not excuse myself to myself; and if I did, it should be rather to apologize for my excuses than for any other fault of mine. I excuse myself as to certain humours which, I think, are more in number than those that I can justify. With regard to them I have also this to say (for I desire to please every body, as hard a matter as it is for a single man, *esse accommodatum ad tantam morum*

Montaigne's apology for the licentiousness of his style.



*ac sermonum et voluntatum varietatem* \*, “to accommodate himself to so great a variety of manners, discourses, and determinations),” that they cannot condemn me for making use of authorities which have been received and approved of for many ages; and that there is no reason that, for want of rhyme, they should refuse me the dispensation which they allow even to the churchmen of our nation and time. Of this the two lines that follow are the most signal examples.

† *Rimula, dispeream, ni monograma tua est.*

*Un vit d' amy la contente et bien traitte ‡.*

What would you think of many others of the like kind? I love modesty; and it is not from judgment that I have chosen this scandalous sort of discourse; it is nature that has chosen it for me. I commend it not any more than all other terms of speaking contrary to received custom; but I excuse it, and, by circumstances, both general and particular, mitigate the accusation.

To pursue this subject: from whence can proceed that usurpation of sovereign authority which you pretend to over those ladies who favour you at their own peril;

*Si furtiva dedit migrâ munuscula nocte ||.*

If in the silence of the night  
She has permitted stolen delight.

Such favourites of the ladies as arrogate to themselves an unreasonable authority over their mistresses blamed for it, and not at all imitated by Montaigne.

so that you presently take upon you the interests coldness, and authority of a husband? It is a free convention; why then do you not stick to it, as you are desirous they should? There is no prescription as to things that are voluntary. It is not the fashion; however, it is certain that I have, in my time, carried on this bargain as far as the nature of it will admit, as conscience

\* Q. Cic. de petitione consulatus, cap. 14.  
poems which Beza composed in his youth, they, who are curious in inquiries of this sort, may consult Bayle's Critical Dictionary in the article of BEZA, note x.  
carm. 66. ver. 145.

† Beza, St. Gelasius.

† As to the too free  
|| Catull. ad Manlium,



tiouſly as any other contract whatſoever, and with ſome air of juſtice; and that I never pretended to declare any affection for them but what I really had, and ingenuouſly diſcovered to them the decay, ſtrength, and ſource of it; together with his fits and intermiſſions. A man does not always hold on in the ſame pace. I have been ſo ſhy of promiſing, that I fancy my performances have exceeded my promiſe, and even what I was obliged to do. They have found me faithful, even to the ſervice of their inſtancy; even an inſtancy avowed, and ſometimes multiplied. I never broke with them whiſt I had the leaſt hold of them; and, what occaſion ſoever they have given me, never broke with them ſo far as to ſcorn or hate them. For ſuch privacies, when even obtained upon terms the moſt ſcandalous, yet oblige me to ſome benevolence. I have ſometimes diſcovered a little indiſcreet anger and impatience upon their tricks and ſubterfuges, and in our diſputes: for I am, by my conſtitution, ſubject to haſty fallies, which, though flight and ſhort, often ſpoil my market. If at any time they were pleaſed to take my free thoughts, I have not failed to give them fatherly, but ſharp advice, and to pinch them in the ſore place. If ever I left them to complain of me, it was rather that they found my love fooliſhly conſcientious in compariſon with the modern cuſtom. I have kept my word in things wherein I might eaſily have been diſpenſed with. They then ſurrendered ſometimes with reputation, and on ſuch articles of capitulation as they eaſily ſuffered to be violated by the conqueror. I have more than once made pleaſure, in its greateſt effort, truckle to the intereſt of their honour; and, when reaſon urged me, have armed them againſt me; ſo that they conducted themſelves with greater ſecurity and gravity by my rules, when they frankly referred themſelves to them, than they would have done by their own. I have ever, to my utmoſt, taken upon myſelf alone the hazard of our aſſignations, in order to ſave them harmleſs: and have always brought about our interviews by intrigues the moſt unpleaſant and unexpected, that they might be leaſt miſtruiſted, while yet,



in my opinion, they were the more practicable. They are chiefly open in those places where they think themselves sheltered. Things that are the least feared are the least defended and observed. One may more easily dare what nobody thinks you would dare to do, which, through its difficulty, becomes easy. Never had any man his approaches more impertinently genital. This way of loving is more according to discipline; but who knows better than I how ridiculous and ineffectual it is to our people; yet I shall not repent of it: I have nothing more to lose by it\*.

—— *me tabula sacer*

*Votiva paries indicat uvida*

*Suspendisse potenti*

*Vestimenta maris Deo†.*

My votive table makes it plain  
That I have quit the briny main,  
And now in Neptune's fane my vest  
Will shew the evidence confess.

It is now high time to speak out: but perhaps I might say, as I would do at another time, thou talkest idly, my friend. The love of thy time has little correspondence with faith and integrity.

———— *Hæc si tu postules.*

*Ratione certa facere, nibilo plus agas,*

*Quàm si des operam, ut cum ratione insanias ‡‡*

These things should'st thou undertake,  
By reason permanent to make;  
This will be all thou'l't get by it,  
Wisely to run out of thy wit.

So, on the contrary, were I to begin, it should certainly be by the same tract, and the progress should be the same, how fruitless soever it might prove. Incapacity and stupa-

\* Montaigne would signify by this, that having been exposed by love to many traverses, he had at length extricated himself from that dangerous passion for ever.

† Hor. lib. i. ode 5. ver. 13, &c.

‡ Terence Eunuch, act i. scene 1. ver. 16, &c.



dity are commendable in an action that is not praiseworthy. The farther I deviate from their humour in this, the nearer I approach to my own. As for the rest, in this bargain I did not suffer myself to be totally captivated : I was pleased with it, but did not forget myself. I reserved the little sense and discretion which nature has given me, entire for their service and my own ; a little rapture, but no dotage. My conscience was also engaged in it, even to an excess of debauchery ; but never so far as to be guilty of ingratitude, malice, and cruelty. I did not purchase the pleasure of this vice at any rate ; but contented myself with its proper and simple expence. *Nul-lum intra se vitium est* ; “ nothing is in itself a vice \*.” I hate a stupid, sluggish laziness almost as much as I do a crabbed and painful employment. The one pinches me, the other lays me asleep. I like wounds as well as bruises, and cuts as well as dry blows. I found in this commerce, when I was best qualified for it, a just medium betwixt the two extremes. Love is a wakeful, spritely, and gay agitation. I was not sick nor sorry with it, but warmed ; and, moreover, changed by it. There it is necessary to make a stop. It hurts none but fools. A young man asked Panætius †, the philosopher, if it was becoming a wise man to be in love : let the wise man look to that, said he, but let not thou and I, who are not so, engage ourselves in an affair of so much agitation and violence as will enslave us to others, and render us contemptible to ourselves. He spoke the truth, that we ought not to trust a passion, so giddy of itself, to a soul that has not fortitude to withstand its assaults, nor to disprove the saying of Agesilaus ‡, that prudence and love cannot associate. It is, in truth, a vain occupation, indecent, scandalous, and unlawful ; but, to carry it on after this manner, I reckon it wholesome, proper to enliven both the body and soul when dull and sluggish. And, in quality of a physician, I would prescribe it to a man of my make and condition, as soon

\* Senec. epist. 95.    † Senec. epist. 117.    ‡ O! how hard a matter is it, said Agesilaus, for a man to be in love and his sober senses at one and the same time! Plutarch in the life of Agesilaus, chap. 4. of Amyot's translation.



as any other recipe whatsoever, to rouse and keep him in vigour when far advanced in years, and to make him daily with the attacks of old age. Whilst we are but in the suburbs of it, and while the pulse yet beats,

*Dum nova canities, dum prima et recta senectus,  
Dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat, et pedibus me  
Porto meis, nullo dextram subeunte bacillo \*.*

Whilst my grey hairs do just approach in sight,  
Whilst my old age is fresh, and stands upright;  
Whilst on fate's spinning-wheel remains more thread,  
And whilst, without a staff, firm is my tread.

we have need to be prompted, and tickled by some such provocative. Do but observe with what youth, vigour, and gaiety it inspired the sage Anacreon: and Socrates, when he was older than I now am, speaking of an amorous object, "Leaning," said he, "† my shoulder to her shoulder, and touching her head with mine, as we were reading both together in one book, I perceived, without jesting, a sudden sting in my shoulder, like some flea-bite, which crept about me five days after; and was accompanied with a continual titillation in my heart." What! did only an accidental touch, and that by the shoulder, raise a heat, and create an alteration in a breast that was chilled and enervated by age; and one too that was the first reformer of the human race! And pray why not? Socrates was a man, and would neither be, nor seem to be any thing else. Philosophy does not combat natural pleasures, provided they be used moderately; and preaches up moderation, but not total abstinence. It raves most against such pleasures as are foreign to nature, and adulterated. It says, that the appetites of the body ought not to be augmented by the mind; and cautions us not to stuff instead of filling the belly, to avoid all enjoyment that may bring

\* Juv. sat. iii. ver. 26, &c.

† Xenophon's Symposium, chap. 4. § 27, 28.



us to want, and all meats and drinks that create thirst or hunger. So, in the service of love, philosophy prescribes to us to take an object that may purely satisfy the necessity of the body, and not move the soul, which ought to have no share in the fact, but simply to follow and assist the body. But have I not reason to judge that these precepts, which are, I think, however, in other respects a little too severe, are only directed to a body that performs its office; and that for a body in a state of decay, like that of a weak stomach, it is excusable to warm and support it by art; and, by the intervention of the fancy, to restore the appetite and alacrity, because it went off of itself?

May we not say that there is nothing in us, during this terrestrial imprisonment, that is purely either corporeal or spiritual; that we injuriously dismember a man alive; and that it seems but reasonable that we should act as favourably with regard to pleasure as to pain? This was (for example) vehement, even to perfection, in the souls of the saints by repentance: the body had naturally a share therein by the right of its union, and yet might have little share in the cause; nevertheless, they were not contented that the body should barely follow and assist the afflicted soul. They afflicted it by itself with grievous and peculiar torments, to the end that both the body and the soul should strive to plunge man in misery, by so much the more wholesome, as it is more piercing. So, in the pleasures of the body, is it not injustice to deny the soul a share in them, and to say that it must be dragged into them as into some forced and servile obligation and necessity? It is rather her part to hatch and foment them; to present and invite herself to them, the governing part being her prerogative; as it is also her province, in my opinion, in those pleasures that are peculiar to her, to inspire and infuse into the body, all the sensation of them which its condition can admit of; and to study how to make them agreeable and salutary to it. For it is highly reasonable, as they say, that the body should not pursue its appetites to the prejudice of the soul: and why,  
is

Montaigne's  
opinion that  
both the body  
and mind ought  
to assist each  
other in the use  
of pleasure.



is it not as reasonable that the soul should not pursue her's to the prejudice of the body?

The advantages that may be reaped, from love in an advanced age. I have no other passion that keeps me in breath. The same effect that avarice, ambition, quarrels, and law-suits have upon other persons, who, like me, are of no particular profession, love would cause to much more advantage. It would render me vigilant, sober, graceful, and careful of my person. It would settle my countenance, so that it could not be spoiled by the crabbed looks of old age, those looks that are so ugly and so lamentable: it would again put me upon solid and wise studies, by which I might render myself more esteemed and beloved, clearing my mind of the despair of itself, and of its use, and making it again acquainted with itself. It would divert me from a thousand uneasy thoughts, a thousand melancholy chagrins, which in activity and an ill state of health bring upon us at such an age. It would, in a dream at least, put fresh warmth into that blood which nature has deserted. It would hold up the chin, and a little stretch out the nerves, as well as add vigour and alacrity to the life of that poor man, who is making large strides towards his dissolution. But I am far from being ignorant that it is a benefit very hard to recover: by weakness and long experience our taste is become more delicate and exquisite. We desire most when we bring least; and are willing to have the most choice when we least deserve to be accepted. From our consciousness of this we are less daring and more diffident; and, considering our condition and theirs, nothing can assure us of being beloved. I am ashamed of myself when in company with those young bucks,

\* *Cujus in indomito constantior inguine nervus,  
Quàm nova collibus arbor inhaeret* †.

\* Epod. lib. ode xii. ver. 19, 20. † i. e. "We are always in a capacity of performing well." This is a short paraphrase on the distich, by la Fontaine, which those, who do not understand the Latin, must be content with; for the terms, made use of by Horace, convey such gross ideas that we do not chuse to translate them literally.



To what end should we carry on our misery where there is such mirth?

*Possint ut juvenes visere fervidi  
Malto non sine risu,  
Dilapsam in cineres facem\*.*

That youths, in fervent wishes bold,  
Not, without laughter, may behold  
A torch, whose early fire  
Could ev'ry breast with love inflame,  
Now faintly spread a sickly gleam,  
And in a smok expire.

They have both strength and reason on their side; let us give way to them; we have nothing more to say for ourselves: and this blossom of springing beauty is not to be touched by hands so stiff with the cold, nor to be dealt with by methods that are purely material. For as the ancient philosopher said to his friend that jeered him because he could not gain the favour of a girl whom he passionately courted, "such new cheese || will not stick to my hook." It is a commerce that stands in need of relation and correspondence. Other pleasures that we receive are capable of being acknowledged by returns of a different kind; but this is only to be paid with the same coin. Really, in this sport, the pleasure which I give, tickles my imagination more than that which is given to me. Now, as he has not a spice of generosity in him, who can receive pleasure where he gives none, it must needs be a mean soul that desires to owe all, and can be contented to maintain a conversation with persons to whom he is a charge. There is no beauty, grace, or privacy, so exquisite that a man of honour ought to desire upon such terms. If they only can be kind to us out of pity, I had much rather not to live at all, than live upon charity. I would have right to demand it of them, in the style that I saw used in Italy, *Fate ben per*

\* Hor. lib. iv. ode 13. ver. 26, &c.

|| Diog. Laertius, in the life of Bion, lib. iv. sect. 47.



voi, "do good for our own sake;" or in the manner that Cyrus exhorted his soldiers: "let him that loves me, follow me." Confort yourself (I shall be told) with women of your own condition, who will, therefore, be more ready to oblige you. O! sottish and insipid.

————— *nolo*

*Barbam vellere mortuo leoni\*.*

I will not twitch a dead lion by the beard.

Xenophon lays it for an objection, and an accusation against Menon †, that none but women that had past their bloom, were the objects of his amours. I really take more pleasure in the bare sight of the just and sweet mixture of two young beauties, or only contemplating it in my fancy, than to act as a second in such a sad disagreeable medley. I leave this whimsical appetite to the emperor Galba ‡, who fancied no flesh but what was tough and old; and to that poor wretch in Ovid:

*O ego dî faciant talem te cernere possim,  
Charaque mutatis oscula ferre comis  
Amplectique meis corpus non pingue lacertis || !*

O! would to heav'n I such might thee behold,  
To kiss those locks when thou in years art old,  
And thy lank body in my arms infold. }

Amongst the chief deformities, I reckon beauties that are artificial and forced. Emonez, a young wench of Chios, thinking, by her fine head-geer, to acquire the beauty which nature had denied her, went to Arcefilaus ¶, the philosopher, and asked him whether it was possible for a wise man to be in love: "yes truly," replied he, "but

\* Mart. lib. ii. epig. 10. ver. 9, 10. † Αὐτὸς (Μενών) Παιδικὰ εἶχε Θαρσύναν, ἀγνεύειν ὧν γενεώτερά Κύρε ἀναβάς, lib. ii. cap. 6. § 15. ‡ Suetonius, in the life of Galba, § 22. || Ex Ponto, lib. i. ep. 4. To his wife, ver. 49, 50. ¶ Diog. Laert. in the Life of Arcefilaus, lib. iv. sect. 34.



“ not with an artificial and counterfeit beauty like  
 “ thine.” The deformity of an avowed old face is not  
 so ugly, in my opinion, as another that is painted, or  
 rather plaistered. Shall I say it without danger of being  
 taken by the collar for it? I do not take love to be  
 properly and naturally in season but in the age next to  
 childhood.

*Quem si puellarum infereres choro,  
 Mille sagaces falleret hospites,  
 Discrimen obscurum, solutis  
 Crinibus, ambiguoque vultu\*.*

Who, plac'd amongst the maids, defies  
 A skilful stranger's prying eyes,  
 So smooth his boyish looks appear,  
 So loose, so womanish his hair.

Nor beauty neither; for, though Homer extends it to  
 the budding of the chin, Plato himself has observed it  
 to be uncommon. And the reason why the sophist Dion  
 called the first down of beards Aristogitons and Harmo-  
 dians, is notorious. I think that in virility love is a  
 little out of its place, but much more in old age.

*Importunus enim transvolat aridas  
 Quercus †. —*

O'er wither'd oaks the wanton flies.

Margaret, queen of Navarre, like a very woman as she  
 was, extends the advantage of the women to a great  
 length, ordering that thirty years of age should be the  
 season for changing the title of beautiful into that of  
 good woman. The shorter time that we allow to love  
 to keep possession of us, it is so much the better for us.  
 Do but observe its carriage. He is a beardless boy who  
 knows not how they behave in his school contrary to all

\* Horace, lib. ii. ode 5. ver. 20, &c.

† Horace, lib. iv. ode 13. ver. 9.



order. Study, exercise, and practice, are ways for insufficiency to proceed by. Novices are the regents in that school. *Amor ordinem nescit* \*, “love knows no order.” Doubtless, its conduct is more graceful when mixed with inadvertency and trouble. Miscarriages and disappointments give it a spirit and a grace. Provided it be sharp and eager it is no great matter whether it be prudent. Do but observe how it goes staggering, tripping, and playing tricks. To guide it by art and wisdom is putting it in the stocks ; and it is cramping its divine liberty to put it into clutches so hairy and callous. For the rest, I have often heard women represent this being as spiritual, and scorn to take any notice of what interest the senses have therein. Every thing is of service to it ; but I can say, I have often seen that we have excused the weakness of their understandings for the sake of the beauty of their persons ; but I never yet saw, that, for the sake of the beauty of the mind, how sedate and mature soever, the ladies were ever inclined to lend a hand to support a body that was fallen ever so little to decay. Why does not some woman or other take it into her head to make that noble Socratical barter of the body for the mind, purchasing a philosophical and spiritual intelligence and generation, at the price of her thighs, the highest price which she can set upon them ? Plato orders, in his laws, that whoever performed any signal and advantageous exploit in war, should not, while it lasted, be denied a kiss, or any other amorous favour, by any woman whatsoever, his deformity or age notwithstanding. What he thinks to be so just in recommendation of military valour, why may it not be the same for the encouragement of any other valour ? And why does not some woman take a fancy to forestall her companions in the glory of this chaste love ? I may well say chaste,

\* Mr. Cotton, in his translation, quotes St. Jerome for this, but does not mention chapter nor page. Anacreon said, long before him, that Bacchus, aided by love, was irregular in his frolics, ode 52. ver. ult.



\* ——— *nam si quando ad prælia ventum est  
Ut quondam in stipulis magnus sine viribus ignis  
Incassum furit ‡.*

For when to join love's battle they engage,  
Like fire in straw they vainly spend their rage.

The vices that are stifled in thought are not the worst.  
to conclude this notable commentary, which has escaped  
from me in a torrent of babble; a torrent impetuous  
sometimes, and offensive;

*Ut missum sponsi furtivo munere malum  
Procurrit casto virginis è gremio:  
Quod miserae oblitæ molli sub veste locatum,  
Dum adventu matris profilit excutitur,  
Atque illud prono præceps agitur decursu,  
Huic mandat tristi conscius ore rubor †.*

As a fair apple, by a lover sent  
To's mistress for a private compliment,  
Which tumbles from the modest virgin's lap,  
Where she had quite forgot it, by mishap;  
When, starting as her mother opens the door,  
And falls out of her garments on the floor!  
While as it rolls and she betrays surprize,  
A guilty blush her fair complexion dyes.

I say that males and females are cast in the same mold;  
and that education and custom excepted, the difference  
between them is not great. Plato calls upon both sexes  
indifferently to associate in all the studies, exercises, of-  
fices, and professions, military and civil, in his Republic.  
And the philosopher Antisthenes § says, "the virtue of  
both is the same." It is much more easy to accuse one  
sex, than to excuse the other, according to the proverb,  
which says, "Vice corrects sin".

\* Georg. iii. ver. 97. † The application which Montaigne here makes  
of Virgil's words is very extraordinary, as will appear immediately to  
those who will be at the pains consulting the original. ‡ Catull. ad  
Hortatium, carm. 63. ver. 19, &c. § Diog. Laert. in the life of Antis-  
thenes, lib. vi. § 12.



## C H A P. VI.

*Of Coaches.*

**I**T is very easy to make it appear that great authors, when they treat of causes, not only mention those which they judge to be the true causes, but those also which they think are not so; provided they have any invention or beauty to recommend them. If what they say be ingenious, it is true and useful enough. We cannot be positive what is the chief cause, and, therefore, muster up several to see if it may not accidentally be amongst them.

—*Namque unam dicere causam*

*Non satis est, verum plures unde una tamen fit* \*

And thus my muse a store of causes brings;

For here, as in a thousand other things,

Tho' by one single cause th' effect is done,

Yet since 'tis had a thousand must be shown

That we may surely hit that single one. }

Will you ask me whence comes the custom of blessing those who sneeze? We produce wind three several ways; that which sallies from below is filthy; that which is vented by the mouth bears some reproach of gluttony; the third eruption is sneezing, which because it comes from the head, and is without offence, we give it this civil reception. Do not laugh at this crafty distinction; for they say it is Aristotle's. I think I had read in Plutarch (who, of all the authors I know, is he who has best mixed art with nature, and judgment with science) giving for a reason of the rising of the stomach in those who go to sea, that it is occasioned by their fear; he having found out some reason, by which he proves that fear is capable of producing such an effect †. I, who am very much subject to this effect, know very well that it is not

\* Lucret. lib. vi. ver. 703.

† In a tract, intitled, Natural Causes, Chap. 11. Ψυχὴ σάλον ἔχουσα ἢ δαρδύμενη σὺλκινι ἢ ἀντίμαστι τοῦ σώματος τῆς παρεχῆς.



owing to this cause ; and I know it not by argument, but by unavoidable experience. Without instancing what I have been told, that the same thing often happens to the beasts, especially to swine, when free from any apprehension of danger ; and what an acquaintance of mine has told me of himself, that, being very subject to it, his inclination to vomit has gone off two or three times, being terrified to a great degree in a violent storm : as it happened to that ancient, who said, *Pejus vexabar quàm ut periculum mihi succurreret* \* ; “ I was too much disordered  
 “ for the apprehension of danger to relieve me.” I never was afraid upon the water ; nor indeed, elsewhere (and have often had just reasons for fear, if death be such a cause) so as to be disturbed and change countenance. Fear springs sometimes as well from want of judgment as from want of courage. All the dangers which I have been in I have looked upon, without winking, with a free, solid, and entire countenance ; and besides, to be afraid requires courage. It has formerly served me better than other courses, so to conduct and regulate my flight, that it was, if not without fear, yet without terror and astonishment. It was stirred indeed, but without amazement or stupefaction. Great souls go much farther, and represent flights, not only calm and temperate, but, moreover, intrepid. We will mention that which Alcibiades † relates of Socrates, his companion in arms ; “ after our ar-  
 “ my was routed, I found him and Lachez in the very rear  
 “ of those who fled, and viewed him at my leisure, and  
 “ in security, for I was mounted on a good horse and he  
 “ on foot ; and thus we had fought. I took notice in  
 “ the first place with what deliberation and resolution he  
 “ fought, compared with Lachez, and then the gallan-  
 “ try of his step nothing different from his ordinary gait,  
 “ his firm and regular countenance, viewing and judging  
 “ what passed about him, looking one while on those,  
 “ and another while upon other friends and enemies, af-  
 “ ter such a manner as encouraged the one, and signified

\* Senec. ep. 53.  
 edit. in 1602.

† Plato in his Banquet, p. 1206. of the Francfort



" to the other, that he would sell his life dear to any one  
 " that offered to take it from him; and so they saved  
 " themselves, for such men are not so liable to be at-  
 " tacked as those who run away are to be pursued." That was the testimony of this great commander, which teaches us what we experience every day, that nothing throws us so much into dangers as an inconsiderate eagerness to keep clear of them. \* *Quo timoris minus est, eo minus ferme periculi est*; "where there is the least fear, there  
 " is generally the least danger." When a man is ready to declare that he thinks of death, and foresees it, our people are in the wrong to say that therefore he is afraid of it. Our foresight of the good or ill that affects us, is equally proper for us. To consider and judge of danger is, in some sort, the reverse of being astonished at it. I do not find myself strong enough to sustain the shock and impetuosity of this passion of fear, or of any other that is vehement. If I was once conquered and beaten down by it, I should never rise again entire. Whoever should once make my soul lose its footing, would never restore it to its right place. It searches, and probes itself too deeply and too much to the quick, and would never suffer the wound it had received to be closed and skinned over. It has been well for me that no sickness has yet dismounted it. Every attack made upon me I oppose with a high hand; by which means the first that should rout me would put it out of my power ever to rally again. I have no after-game to play. On which side soever the inundation breaks my banks, I lie open, and am drowned without remedy. Epicurus said, that a wise man can never turn fool; and I have an opinion the reverse of this sentence, that he who has been once an arrant fool, will never after be very wise. God gives me cold according to my cloathing, and passions proportionable to the strength I have to bear them. Nature having laid me open on the one side, has covered me on the other. She has disarmed me of strength, but has armed me with insensibility, and an apprehension that is either moderate or dull. I have not for some time (and much less when

\* Titus Livy, lib. xxii. cap. 5.



I was young) been reconciled to a coach, litter, or boat; and hate all other riding but on horseback, both in town and country. But to me a litter is more intolerable than a coach, and for the same reason I had rather be tossed upon the water, so as to give me fear, than be rocked in a dead calm. By the little jerks I feel from the oars stealing the vessel from under me, I find both my head and stomach disordered I know not how, since I cannot endure that my seat should tremble. When the sail, or current of the water, keeps us upright, or when we are in tow, that regular agitation gives me no uneasiness. It is an interrupted motion that offends me, and most of all when it is most languid; I know not how to express it otherwise. The physicians have ordered me to squeeze and gird the bottom of my belly with a napkin as a remedy; which, however, I have not tried, being accustomed to struggle with my own infirmities, and to overcome them by myself.

Did my memory serve me, I would not think my time ill spent in setting down here the infinite variety that we find in histories as to the use of chariots in the service of war; various according to the nations, and according to the ages; and, in my opinion, of great effect and necessity, insomuch that it is a wonder we have lost all knowledge of them. I will only say this, that very lately, in the time of our fathers, the Hungarians made very advantageous use of them against the Turks; every one of them having a targeteer and a musqueteer, and a number of harquebusiers ready charged, and all covered with a target-fence, like that which defends the rowers in a galley. They set three thousand such chariots in the front of their battle, and, after their cannon had played, made them all pour in their shot upon the enemy, and force them to swallow that discharge, before they tasted of the rest, which was no little advance; or else they drove the said coaches into their squadrons to break and open a passage through them; besides the use which they might make of them in a dangerous place to flank the troops marching into the field, or to cover a lodg-

The use of  
coaches in bat-  
tle.



lodgment speedily, and fortify it. In my time a gentleman, in one of our frontier places, who was unweildy, and could procure no horse able to carry his weight, having a quarrel upon his hands, rode through the country in a chariot of this fashion, and found great convenience in it. But we will leave these military chariots.

The use of  
coaches for  
luxury.

The last kings of our first race, as if their effeminacy had not been sufficiently manifest by other proofs of it \*, travelled through the country lolling in a chariot drawn by four oxen. Mark Anthony was the first that † caused himself to be drawn at Rome by lions harnessed to his coach, in which a singing wench rode with him. Heliogabalus did as much afterwards, calling himself Cybele, the mother of the gods ‡, and was also drawn by tygers, counterfeiting the god Bacchus; he also one while harnessed a brace of stags to his coach, at another time four dogs, and at another four whores, by whom he was drawn in state, both himself and they stark naked. The emperor Firmis caused his coach to be drawn by ostriches of a prodigious size, so that it seemed rather to fly than run upon wheels ||.

Extravagant  
expences un-  
becoming in  
a prince.

The strangeness of these inventions puts this other fancy into my head, that it is a kind of pusillanimity in monarchs, and a proof that they are not sufficiently sensible

\* Mr. Cotton, by not adverting to a transposition made here by his author, has been deceived in his meaning, and begins the paragraph thus, "As if the insignificancy of coaches had not been sufficiently known by better proofs," &c. This mistake of so able a translator, has obliged me to explain this passage, which is liable to be misunderstood also by many others. I shall only add, that this kind of transposition, in which all the difficulty lies, being very familiar to Montaigne, his translator ought to be well acquainted with it. As every man has his particular gait and tone of voice, so every author has his peculiar style. If a translator duly considers, before hand, the turn, the manners, and, as one may say, the very steps of his original, he would often understand it by half a word; but if he neglect to make it familiar to him, by contenting himself with a vague understanding of it that is merely grammatical, he will every now and then make the author, whom he translates, speak the very contrary to what he means; and generally, instead of entering into the spirit of his author, will only express his meaning in a very imperfect manner. † Plutarch, in the life of Mark Anthony, chap. 3. ‡ Ælius Lampridius, p. 110, 111. Hist. August.

|| Flavii Vopisæ Firmus, p. 244. Hist. August.

what



what they are, when they court honour, and affect a grand appearance by excessive expence. It were, indeed, excusable when in a foreign country; but when a prince is among his own subjects, where he may do what he list, it derogates from his dignity, which is the highest degree of honour that he is capable of attaining to. So methinks, it is superfluous in a private gentleman to go finely dressed at home, since his house, his retinue, and his table, answer sufficiently for him. The advice that Iſocrates gives to his king seems to be grounded upon reason, viz. that he should be splendid \* in his furniture and utensils, as it is an expence in what is durable, and will pass to his successors; and that he should avoid all sorts of magnificence which soon grow out of fashion, and are forgot. I loved to go fine when I was a younger brother, for want of other ornament, and it became me well. There are some people upon whom fine cloaths are an eye-sore. We have admirable stories of the frugality of our kings with respect to their persons and gifts: kings that were great in reputation, merit, and fortune. Demosthenes pleads strenuously against the law of the city that assigned the public money for the pomp of their games and festivals. He would have their grandeur displayed in a number of ships well equipped, and good armies well provided for: and Theophrastus † is justly to be blamed, who, in his book of Riches, has established a contrary opinion, and maintains that an expence of this nature is the true fruit of opulence. These are pleasures, says Aristotle ‡, that only affect the lowest class of the people, that vanish from their remembrance as soon as they are glutted with them, and of which no serious and judicious man can have any esteem ||. Such expence would, in my opinion, be much more royal, as well as more useful, just, and durable, in ports, docks,

\* Orat. ad Nicoclem, p. 32. Paris edit. for John Libert, anno 1621.

† The author of this censure was Cic. de Offic. lib. ii. cap. 16. where he says, "Miror quod in mentem venerit Theophrasto, in eo libro quem de divitiis scripsit; in quo multa præclare, illud absurdè. Est enim multus in laudandâ magnificentiâ, et apparatione popularium munerum; taliumque sumptuum facultatem fructum divitiarum putat."

‡ All this is also taken from Cic. de Offic. lib. ii. cap. 16.

|| And this likewise, ibid. cap. 17.



walls, and fortifications; in sumptuous fabrics, churches, hospitals, colleges, the repair of streets and highways; for which the memory of pope Gregory XIII. will be reverend to late posterity; and wherein our queen Katharine would manifest her natural generosity and magnificence to succeeding ages, if she had it as much in her power, as she has it at heart. Fortune has vexed me much by interrupting the fine structure of the Pont-neuf of our great city, and depriving me of the hopes of ever seeing it finished.

The people are disgusted with it, and not without reason.

Moreover, the subjects, who are spectators of these triumphs, are apt to think that the riches displayed before them are their own, and that they are entertained at their own cost. For the people are ready to presume of kings as we do of our servants, that they ought to take care to provide us abundantly with all that we want; but that they ought not to finger any part of it themselves. And, therefore, the emperor Galba being pleased with the performance of a certain musician who played to him at supper, called for his coffer, and gave him a handful of crowns which he took out of it, with these words, "this is not the public money, but my own." But so it is that the people are most commonly in the right, and that their eyes are fed with what they had once to feed their bellies.

Whether liberality well becomes a king, and to what degree.

Liberality itself shines not with its true lustre in a sovereign hand. It best becomes private people; for, to consider the matter nicely, a king has nothing properly his own; and he owes even himself to others. Jurisdiction is not granted in favour of the magistrate, but of the people that become subject to it. A superior is never created such for his own profit, but that of the inferior; and a physician for the sick person, not for himself. All magistracy, as well as every art or mystery, is designed for external application. \* *Nulla ars in se versatur*, "no art is confined within

\* Cicero has these words, "semper illud extrinsecus est quod arte comprehenditur. Nihil opus est exemplis hoc facere longius; est enim perspicuum



“within itself.” Therefore the governors of young princes, who study to imprint this virtue of liberality on their minds, and preach to them to deny nothing, and to reckon nothing so well laid out as what they give (a lesson which I have known to be very much in vogue) either have more regard to their own profit than that of their sovereign, or do not well understand whom they speak to. It is a very easy matter to imprint liberality in the person who has as much as he will to supply it with at the expence of another. And the estimate of it not being formed according to the value of the present, but upon the wealth of the giver, it dwindles to nothing in such able hands. They become prodigal before they are liberal: and yet their liberality is but of small recommendation compared with the other royal virtues; yet it is the only one, as Dionysius said, that suits well with tyranny itself. I would rather teach him that verse of the ancient husbandman,

Τῇ χειρὶ δεῖ σπείρειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὀλῶ τῷ θυλακῷ \*,

“That whoever hopes for a good crop, must sow with his hand, and not pour the seed out of the bag.” The grain should be scattered; and not cast on the ground in heaps; and that since he is to give, or rather pay and make amends to so many people, according to their deserts, he ought to distribute with justice and deliberation. If the bounty of a prince be without discretion, and without measure, I had rather he were covetous.

*“spicuum nullam artem in se versari sed esse aliud artem ipsam, aliud quod propositum sit arti.”* De Finib. Bon. et Mal. lib. v. cap. 6. How happy would be the subjects of Persia, Indostan, &c. if their princes and ministers had the wisdom and virtue to draw from this great principle the conclusion which naturally flows from it, and which Montaigne here points out to them?

\* This maxim Montaigne has quoted from a small tract of Plutarch, entitled, Whether the Athenians were more excellent in Arms than in Learning, chap. 4. where Corinna makes use of it to convince Pindar that he had in one of his poems inserted too many fables.



What is properly the truly royal virtue, and that ought to accompany the bounty of kings.

The virtue of royalty seems to consist most in justice; and of all the parts of justice, that best denotes the king, which accompanies his liberality; for this they have particularly reserved to their own province, whereas all other justice they remit to the administration of others. Lavish bounty is a very weak means to acquire them good will; for it disgusts more people than it brings over to them. † *Quo in plures usus sis, minus in multos uti possis.*—*Quid autem est stultius, quàm, quod libenter facias, curare, ut id diutius facere non possis?* “The more you dispense to some, the less you “ will be able to dispense to many: and what greater “ folly can there be than to order it so, that what you “ are heartily inclined to do, you put it out of your “ power to perform long?” And if it be conferred without regard to merit, it puts him to the blush who receives it, and is received with an ill grace. Tyrants have been sacrificed to the hatred of the people by the hands of those very men whom they have unjustly advanced; such kind of men thinking to secure to themselves the possession of benefits unduly received, if they discover a contempt and hatred of him from whom they derived them; and in this they join with the common judgment and opinion.

It is not in the power of a prince to satisfy the cravings of his subjects.

When a prince makes exorbitant grants, his subjects make exorbitant demands, and accommodate themselves not to reason, but example. We have reason, certainly, very often to blush at our own impudence. We are over-paid, according to justice, when the recompence equals our service; for do not we owe something to our prince by natural obligation? If he bears our expence he does too much; it is enough that he contributes to it: the overplus is called a benefit which cannot be demanded, for the very name of liberality sounds of liberty. As we use it there is no end of it. We never reckon what we have received. We are only for that liberality which is to come. For which reason, the

† Cicero de Offic. lib. ii. cap. 15.



more a prince exhausts himself in giving, the poorer he becomes in friends. How should he satisfy those longing appetites, which the more they are fed the more they crave? He whose thoughts are bent upon grasping, never more thinks of what he has grasped. There is nothing so peculiar to covetousness as ingratitude.

The example of Cyrus will not do amiss in this place, to serve the kings of the age as a touchstone, to know whether their bounties are well or ill bestowed; and to shew them how much better that emperor proportioned them than they do. By this means they are reduced afterwards to borrow of their unknown subjects; and rather of them to whom they have done wrong, than of those to whom they have done good; and so receive aids from them, wherein there is nothing of a Free Gift but the name. Cræsus reproached him for his largess, and † cast up how much his treasure would have amounted to if he had been closer fisted. Cyrus longed to justify his liberality, and therefore sent dispatches into all parts to the grandees of his dominions, whom he had particularly advanced, requesting every one of them to assist his necessity with as much money as he could spare, and to send it to him with a note of the sums. When all the bills were brought to him every one of his friends, not thinking it enough to offer him only so much as he had received from his bounty, and adding to it a great deal of his own ‡, it happened that this sum amounted to much more than if he had been as frugal as Cræsus would have had him: whereupon Cyrus said ||, “ I am as much in love with riches as other  
 “ princes, but rather a better manager. You see with  
 “ what a small deposit I have gained the inestimable trea-  
 “ sure of so many friends, and how much more faithful  
 “ treasurers they are to me than mercenary men would be  
 “ without obligation, without affection; and that my  
 “ cash is better lodged than in chests, which would bring

Example of the liberality of a prince, from whence princes may learn to bestow their gifts properly.

† In Xenophon's Cyropædia, lib. 8. § 9. ‡ Ibid. § 10. Δίγεται δε λοχιζόμενοι ὁ Κροῖς πολλὰ πλάστια εὐρεῖν, ἢ ἔφη Κύρου εἶναι ἐν τοῖς θησαυροῖς ἡδυν, εἰ συνέλεγον.  
 || Ibid. § 11.



“ upon me the hatred, envy, and contempt of other  
“ princes.”

The expences of  
the emperors at  
the public spec-  
tacles why not  
justifiable.

The emperors alleged the dependency of their authority in some measure (at least in appearance) on the good will of the Roman people, as an excuse for the superfluity of their plays and public spectacles; they having been accustomed at all times to be humoured with such extravagant shows, and entertainments. But they were private men who had brought up this custom to gratify their fellow-citizens and companions by such profusion and magnificence, chiefly at their own expence; the custom had quite another taste when it came to be kept up by the sovereigns. *Pecuniarum translatio a justis dominis ad alienos non debet liberalis videri*†; “ the transferring of money from the right owners to  
“ others ought not to be deemed liberality.”

Alexander re-  
proved by his  
father for en-  
deavouring to  
gain the affec-  
tion of the Ma-  
cedonians by  
presents.

Philip perceiving that his son went about to gain the affection of the Macedonians by presents, reprimanded him in a letter, after this manner, viz. “ What  
“ could mislead you to think that those  
“ will be faithful to you whom thou hast  
“ bribed with money? Have you a  
“ mind that the Macedonians should look upon you not  
“ as a sovereign, but as their cash-keeper and corrupter?  
“ If you would practise upon them, do it by the good  
“ deeds of virtue, and not by bounty from thy coffers †.”

A digression  
touching the  
magnificence of  
the spectacles  
with which the  
Roman empe-  
rors entertained  
the people.

It was, however, a fine thing to bring to the theatre, and therein plant a great number of large trees, with all their branches in full verdure, representing a great shady forest, beautifully disposed in just symmetry; and, on the first day, to throw into it a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a thousand boars, and as many fallow-deer, and abandon them to the prey of the people; and the next day to cause a hundred great lions, as many leopards, and three

† Cicero de Offic. lib. i. cap. 14.

† Cicero de Offic. lib. ii. cap. 13.



hundred bears to be knocked on the head in his presence; and, on the third day, to make three hundred couple of gladiators fight in earnest; all which was done by the emperor Probus. It was also very fine to see those vast amphitheatres cased with marble, curiously set off with figures and statues, and the inside shining with rare decorations.

*Baltbeus\* en gemmis, en illita porticus auro.*

Behold a belt, with jewels glorious made,  
And a brave portico with gold o'erlaid.

All the sides of this great space filled and environed, from the bottom to the top, with sixty or eighty rows of seats, all of marble also, and covered with cushions,

————— *exeat, inquit,*  
*Si pudor est, et de pulvino surgat equestri,*  
*Cujus res legi non sufficit †.*

They who by law can't make a title fit,  
Let such, for shame, th' equestrian cushion quit.

where an hundred thousand spectators might sit at their ease; and to make the stage, where the plays were performed, first open by art, and to cleave into chasms representing dens, from which issued out the beasts designed for the spectacle; and then, secondly, to bring a deluge of water upon the stage, carrying sea-monsters, and ships of force to represent a sea-fight; and, thirdly, to drain and dry the stage again for the combat of the gladiators; and, for the fourth scene, to have the stage strewed

\* I know not what is strictly to be understood here by the word *baltbeus*. In the amphitheatres this term was applied to certain steps that were higher and wider than the others, as may be seen in the Antiquities of Father Montfaucon, tom. III. part ii. p. 256. Father Tachart, in his Latin and French Dictionary, says, that the word is used by Vitruvius to denote a belt or girdle round the bottom and top of a column. Whether jewels would make a better figure there than on Montfaucon's steps, I leave to the determination of the connoisseurs.

† Calphurnius, eclog. 7. entitled Templum.

‡ Juv. sat. 3. ver. 153.



with vermilion and storax, instead of sand, there to make a solemn feast for all that vast multitude of people; which is the last act of one day only.

——— *quoties nos descenditis arenæ  
Vidimus in partes, ruptâque voragine terræ  
Emersisse feras, et iisdem sæpe latebris  
Aurea cum proceps creverunt arbuta libro  
Nec solum nobis silvestria cernere monstra  
Contigit, æquoreos ego cum certantibus ursis  
Spectavi vitulos, et equorum nomine dignum,  
Sed deforme pecus \*.*

How often, when spectators, have we seen  
Part of the spacious theatre sink in;  
And, from a sudden chasm in the earth,  
Start up wild beasts : then presently give birth  
Unto a shining grove of golden bow'rs,  
Of shrubs that blossom'd with enamell'd flow'rs ?  
Nor yet of sylvan monsters had we sight:  
Alone; I saw sea-calves with wild bears fight ;  
And a deformed sort of cattle came,  
Which river or sea-horses we might name.

Sometimes they have made a high mountain rise full of fruit-trees, and others of verdure; from the tops of which trickled down a current of water, as from the mouth of a fountain. One while a great ship came rolling in, which opened and divided of itself; and, after having disgorged from its hold four or five hundred beasts for fight, closed again, and disappeared of itself. At other times, from the bottom of this stage, they caused sweet-scented waters to spout upwards, and dart their threads to such a prodigious height as to sprinkle and perfume the vast multitude of spectators. Then, to defend themselves from the wind, rain, or heat, they had that huge-fabric covered over with purple curtains of needle-work, or of silk of va-

\* Calphurn. eclog. 7. ver. 64 to 72.



rious colours, which they could either draw or undraw as they pleased.

*Quamvis non modico caleant spectacula sole  
Vela reducuntur cum venit Hermogenes \*.*

The curtains, tho' the sun does scorch the skin,  
Are, when Hermogenes † appears, drawn in.

The net-work also, that was set before the people to defend them from the fury of those wild beasts, was of gold-tissue,

— *auro quoque torta refulgent ‡.*  
*Retia.*

And woven nets refulgent are with gold.

If there be any thing excusable in extravagancies of this kind, it is where the invention and novelty furnish admiration, and not the expence. In the same vanities we discover how fruitful those ages were in wits of a different kind from ours. It fares with this sort of fertility as it does with all other productions of nature. Not that she therein employed her utmost effort at that time. We do not travel, we rather roam up and down, and whirl this way and that; and tread the same ground over again. I am afraid our knowledge is weak in every respect. We do not look far, and scarce at all behind us. Our understanding comprehends little, and exists but a little while, it being short, not only in extent of time, but of matter.

\* Martial. lib. xii. ver. 15, 16.

† This Hermogenes was an arrant thief, and they took down the curtains for fear he should find some means or other to steal them away.

‡ Calphurnius, eleg. 8. entitled Templum, ver. 53.



*Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona  
Multi, sed omnes illacrymabiles  
Urgentur, ignotique longâ  
Nocte\*.*

Before great Agamemnon reign'd,  
Reign'd kings as great as he, and brave †  
Whose huge ambition's now contain'd  
In the small compass of a grave:  
In endless night they sleep, unwept, unknown.

‡ *Et supera bellum Thebanum et funera Trojae,  
Multi alias alii quoque res cecinere poete †.*

And long before the wars of Thebes and Troy,  
On other things bards did their song employ.

Solon's account of what he had learnt from the Egyptian priests, of the long duration of their state, and of their way of learning and preserving foreign histories, is not, methinks, a testimony to be slighted upon this consideration. ¶ *Si interminatam in omnes partem magnitudinem regionum videremus et temporum, in quam se injiciens animus et entendens, ita late longeque peregrinatur, ut nullam oram ultimi videat, in qua possit infistere: in hac immensitate——infinita vis innumerabilium, appareret formarum* ¶; “could we see that boundless extent of  
“countries and ages, in all their parts, on which  
“the mind being fixed and intent, might ramble  
“where and when it list, without meeting with  
“any limits to its sight, we would discover in-  
“numerable forms in that immensity.” Though all

\* Horace, lib. iv. ode 9. ver. 25, &c. † Montaigne diverts himself here in giving Lucretius' words in this distich, a construction directly contrary to what they bear in that poem. ‡ Lucret. lib. v. ver. 327, &c. ¶ Here also Montaigne puts a sense quite different from what the words bear in the original; but the application he makes of them is so happy that one would declare they were actually put together only to express his own sentiment. “Et temporum” is an addition by Montaigne, and, instead of “infinita vis innumerabilium appareret formarum,” it is in Cicero “infinita vis innumerabilium volutat atomorum.” These two last are sufficient to shew that Cicero treats of quite another thing than what Montaigne does here.

¶ Cic. de Natura Deorum, lib. i. cap. 20.



that is arrived to our knowledge of the time past should be true, and known by any one person, it would be less than nothing compared with what is unknown. And of this very image of the world, which glides away while we are in it, how scanty and contracted is the knowledge of the most curious inquirers? Not only of particular events, which fortune often renders exemplary and important, but of the state of great governments and nations, not above a hundredth part has reached our knowledge. We make a parade of the wonderful invention of our great guns, and of our printing, which other men, at the other end of the world, in China, enjoyed a thousand years before us. Did we but see as much of the world as we do not see, it is probable we would perceive a perpetual multiplication and vicissitude of forms. There is nothing single and rare in respect to nature, nor, indeed, with regard to our knowledge, which is a wretched foundation for our rules, and fondly presents us with a very false image of things. As we, now-a-days, vainly infer the world to be in a state of declension and decrepitude by the arguments we draw from our own weakness and decay,

*Jamque adeò affecta est ætas, effataque tellus †.*

So much the age, so much the earth decays.

In like manner did he, of old, vainly conjecture the birth and youth of the world, by the vigour he observed in the wits of his time abounding in novelties, and the invention of divers arts.

*Verùm, ut opinor, habet novitatem summa, recensque  
Natura est mundi, neque primum exordia cæpit :  
Quare etiam quædam nunc artes expoliuntur,  
Nunc etiam augeſcunt, nunc addita navigiis sunt  
Multa †.*

But sure the nature of the world is strong,  
And, ſince it firſt began, it can't be long;

† Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 2150.

† Lucret. lib. v. ver. 321, &c.



The reason, why I think so, is, we know  
 That arts increase, and still politer grow ;  
 And many things, from former times conceal'd,  
 Are by extensive commerce new reveal'd.

Of the new  
 world, and  
 the genius of  
 its inhabit-  
 ants when it  
 was first dis-  
 covered.

This world of ours has lately found out  
 another (and who will assure us that this is  
 the last that will be discovered, since the Dæ-  
 mons, the Sibyls, and We too were, till now,  
 quite ignorant of it) altogether as big popu-  
 lous, and fruitful as this ; and yet such a  
 novice, so much a child that it still learns its A, B, C.  
 It is not fifty years ago that it knew neither letters, weights,  
 measures, vestments, corn, nor vines. It was even quite  
 naked in its mother's lap, and only lived upon what she  
 nursed it with. If we rightly judge of our period, and  
 this poet also, of the youth of the age he lived in,  
 this other world will be but just entering into light when  
 ours shall make its exit. The universe will be paralytic ;  
 one member will be benumbed, another in vigour. I  
 fear, indeed, that we shall have very much hastened the  
 decay and ruin of the new world by our infection, and  
 that it will pay very dear for our opinions, and our arts.  
 It was an infant world ; yet we have not whipped, nor  
 subjected it to our discipline by our valour and natural  
 strength ; we have neither won the people by our justice  
 and goodness, nor subdued them by our magnanimity.  
 Most of their answers, and the negotiations we have had  
 with them, prove that they were not inferior to us in the  
 clearness of natural understanding and apprehension. The  
 astonishing magnificence of the cities of Cusco and Mexico,  
 and, among many things of the like kind, the garden of  
 that king, wherein all trees, fruits, and herbs, according  
 to the order and size they are of in a garden, were cu-  
 riously figured in gold, as were in his closet all the animal  
 bred in his dominions, and the sea ; and the beauty of  
 their manufactures in jewels, feathers, cotton, and paint-  
 ing, shew that they likewise did not yield to us in industry.  
 But as for devotion, observance of the laws, goodness,  
 liberality, loyalty, and plain dealing, it was of service to  
 us



us that we had not ſo great a ſhare of thoſe virtues as they. For, by this advantage, they ruined, ſold, and betrayed themſelves.

As to boldneſs and courage, ſteadineſs, conſtancy; and a reſolution to bear pains, hunger, and even death, I would not fear to ſet the examples I find among them in compariſon with the moſt noted inſtances in antiquity that are to be met with in the memoirs of our ſide of the globe. For, as thoſe who have ſubdued them, take away but the tricks and frauds which they made uſe of to gull them, and the juſt cauſe which thoſe nations had of aſtoniſhment to ſee ſo ſudden, and unexpected an arrival of men with beards, differing in language, religion, form, and countenance, from ſo remote a part of the world, which they never heard was at all inhabited, mounted, on great monſters to them unknown, againſt ſuch as had not ſo much as ever ſeen a horſe before, or any other beaſt trained up to carry a man or any other burden; to ſee thoſe men caſed with a ſhining, impenetrable ſhell, and armed with a cutting and glittering blade, brandiſhing it againſt thoſe who, out of wonder at the brightneſs of a looking-glaſs or a knife, would truck great wealth in gold and pearls for them; and who had neither the ſkill nor matter wherewith to penetrate our ſteel, if they had ever ſo much time: add to this the thunder and lightning of our cannon and muſkets, enough to have frightened Cæſar himſelf had he been ſurprized when ſo unexperienced, and now againſt a naked people, except where they had the apparel of quilted cotton, without other arms at the moſt, but bows, ſtones, ſtaves, and bucklers of wood: a people over-reached, under the colour of friendſhip and good faith, by a curioſity of ſeeing things ſtrange and unknown: take away, I ſay, this diſparity from the conquerors, and you take away from them all the ſource of ſo many victories. When I conſider that invincible ardour wherewith ſo many thouſands of men, women, and children ſo often preſented and threw themſelves into unavoidable dangers, for defence of their gods and their liberties; that generous obſtinacy to ſuffer all extremities and difficulties,

The Spaniards ſubdued the Americans by craft and ſurprize, rather than by valour.



and even death, rather than submit to the government of those by whom they were so shamefully abused; and some chusing to die of hunger, and to starve themselves to death, after being made prisoners, rather than to accept of nourishment from the hands of their enemies so basely victorious: I foresee, that whoever should have attacked them, supposing an equality of arms, experience, and numbers, would have had a dangerous, if not a more desperate task to manage than in any other war we have

The Americans would have been happy if they had fallen into the hands of conquerors more humane and polite.

seen. What pity it is that so noble a conquest did not fall to Alexander, or to those ancient Greeks and Romans; and that so great a revolution and change of so many empires and nations had not been effected by hands that might have used them courteously, and refined them by grubbing up

what was savage amongst them, cherishing, and propagating the good seed which nature had produced there; and by not only mingling in the culture of their lands, and the ornament of their cities, the arts of this part of the world, but incorporating the virtues of the Greeks and Romans with those that were originals of their country! What a reparation, and what an amendment would it have been to the whole world, had our first examples and deportment in those parts allured the people to the admiration and imitation of virtue, and formed a fraternal society and understanding betwixt them and us! How easy would it have been to have made advantage of minds so undisciplined and so thirsty for knowledge, and such as, for the greatest part, had good natural parts to work upon.

With what barbarity they were treated by the Spaniards.

On the contrary, we have taken advantage of their ignorance and inexperience, with the greater ease to incline them to treachery, luxury, avarice, and to all sorts of inhumanity and cruelty, by the example and pattern of our manners. Was poultry traffic ever promoted at so dear a rate? So many cities demolished, so many nations exterminated, so many millions of people put to the sword; and the richest, and most beautiful part of the world turned up-side-down for the traffic of

pearls



peasants and pepper! Mean victories! Never did ambition, never did national animosities provoke men to the commission of such horrid hostilities, against one another, attended with such miserable calamities.

The answer of some Americans to those execrable robbers.

Certain Spaniards coasting along the sea in quest of their mines, landed in a very fruitful, pleasant country, well inhabited, where they made their usual remonstrances to the people: "that they were peaceable men, who had made a long voyage, being sent on the part of the king of Castile, the greatest prince in the habitable world, to whom the pope, God's vicegerent upon earth, had granted the principality of all the Indies: that if they would become tributaries to him, they should be used very courteously; at the same time requiring provisions of them for their nourishment, and gold for their use in medicine: they also recommended to them the belief of one God alone, and the truth of our religion, which they advised them to embrace, adding thereto some menaces." The answer was this, viz. "That as to their being peaceable, they did not seem to be such, if they were so. As to their king, because he asked, he must certainly be poor and necessitous; and the person who had allotted him this part of the world must be a man fond of strife, by attempting to give away that which was not his own, and to bring the title of the ancient possessors into dispute. As to provisions, they would furnish them; that of gold they had but little, and, indeed, made no account of it, forasmuch as it was of no use to the service of life, which all their care was to pass happily and pleasantly; that, however, they were welcome to take what they could find, except that which was employed in the service of their gods. As to the one God only, they liked what they said of him, but they were not inclined to change their religion, having so long lived in it to their advantage; and that they were not accustomed to take advice from any but their friends and acquaintance. As to menaces, it discovered a wrong judgment to offer to threaten those whose nature and power was



“to them unknown: that, therefore, they had best quit  
 “their coast without delay, for they were not used to take  
 “the civilities and remonstrances of armed men, and  
 “foreigners too, in good part; otherwise they should  
 “do by them as they had done by these others; shew-  
 “ing them, at the same time, the heads of several men  
 “executed, which were set up round the walls of their  
 “city.” Whether this was childish bubble, from an  
 infant state, let the instance here given determine. But  
 so it is, that the Spaniards, neither in this, nor many  
 other places, where they did not find the merchandize  
 they wanted, made no seizure nor attack, whatever other  
 commodity was to be had there: witness my cannibals.

The Spaniards  
 inhuman usage  
 of the king of  
 Peru, after  
 they had made  
 him prisoner of  
 war.

Of two of the most potent monarchs of  
 that world, and, perhaps, of this; kings  
 of so many kings, and the last the Span-  
 iards drove from thence, the king of Peru  
 being taken in battle, and put to a ransom  
 so excessive as is beyond all belief; which,  
 however, was punctually paid; and having, by his con-  
 versation, given evident proof of a frank, generous, and  
 constant spirit, and of a clear and undisturbed imagina-  
 tion, the conquerors, after having exacted of him a mil-  
 lion three hundred twenty-five thousand five hundred  
 weight of gold, besides silver, and other things that a-  
 mounted to no less (insomuch that their horses were now  
 shod with solid gold) had a mind to see (how perfidious  
 soever it might be deemed) what might be the rest of  
 this king's treasure, and to make that also their proper-  
 ty. To this end, a false charge was preferred against  
 him, and false evidence suborned to prove that he had  
 formed a design to raise an insurrection in his provinces  
 for recovering his liberty. Upon this, by the virtuous  
 sentence of the very men who had hatched this plot a-  
 gainst him, he was condemned to be hanged in public,  
 making him compound for the torture of being burnt  
 alive, by submitting to baptism, at the place of execu-  
 tion. A horrid and unheard-of barbarity, which he un-  
 derwent, however, with an air truly brave and royal,  
 without alteration either of his looks or language. And  
 after this, to appease the people, who were astonished and  
 con-



confounded at so strange a scene, the Spaniards put on a shew of deep mourning for his death, and ordered him a sumptuous funeral.

The other was the king of Mexico, who, after having been long besieged in his capital city, wherein, if ever a prince and people shewed it in this world, he discovered the utmost that patience and perseverance are capable of doing, had

Their execrable cruelty to the king of Mexico, who had also the misfortune to fall into their hands.

the misfortune of being delivered up alive into the hands of his enemies, upon articles of being treated as a king; (neither, during the time of his imprisonment, was any part of his behaviour unworthy of that title) but his enemies, after their conquest, not finding so much gold as they expected, when they had ransacked and rummaged every place, they proceeded to extort new discoveries, by inflicting the most hellish torments they could invent upon the prisoners whom they had taken; but, as they gained no advantage by it, their courage being greater than their tortures, they were at last so enraged that, contrary to their faith, and contrary to the law of nations, they condemned the king himself, and one of the chief courtiers, to be put upon the rack in the presence of one another. The nobleman, finding his spirits near spent with the pains and the heat of burning coals all round him, pitifully turned his dying eyes upon his master, as if it were to ask his pardon that he could hold out no longer. The king, darting a fierce and severe look at him, as reproaching his cowardice and meanness of spirit, said only these words to him with a harsh and steady voice, "and what dost thou think of me, that I am in a bagnio? Am I more at ease than thyself?" Upon this the courtier suddenly sunk under his pains, and died on the spot. The king, being half roasted, was carried from thence, not so much out of pity (for what compassion could ever reach souls so barbarous that, for giving a dubious information of some vessel of gold to be pillaged, they caused not a private man only, but a king, so great both in fortune and merit, to be broiled before their eyes) but it was because his constancy rendered their cruelty still the more shameful.



ful. They afterwards hanged him for having had the courage to attempt to set himself free by force of arms from so long a state of captivity and subjection; and he made his exit in a manner becoming so magnanimous a prince.

The horrid butchery which the Spaniards committed in America on their prisoners of war.

At another time they burnt alive, in one and the same fire, four hundred and sixty men, viz. four hundred of the common people, and sixty of the chief lords of a province, whom they had taken pri-

soners of war. These narratives we have from themselves; for they do not only confess the facts, but boast of, and justify them: could it be to prove their justice, or their zeal for their religion? Certainly, these are methods too different from, and contrary to so holy an end. Had it been their view to extend our religion, they would have considered that it is not propagated by the possession of territories, but of hearts; and would have thought the blood spilt by the necessities of war too much, without increasing the effusion by a slaughter, like that of wild beasts, as universal as fire and sword could make it, having only chose to save as many as they intended to make wretched slaves of, to the work and service of their mines: so that many of the Spanish generals were put to death on the place of conquest, by order of the kings of Castille, justly offended with the horror of their behaviour; and they were almost of them hated and despised. God justly permitted that all this great plunder should be swallowed up by the sea in its transportation, or by the civil wars, in which they devoured one another; and the greatest part of them was buried on the spot, without gaining any fruit of their victory.

The treasure of the Americans not so considerable as was believed at first.

As for the revenue, and what was in the treasury of a provident and prudent king, the reason why it was so far short of the hopes those who came before had conceived, and of that abundance of riches which the Spaniards found at their first arrival in this new world (for, though a great deal was fetched from thence, we find it nothing in comparison of what might be expected) was because the use of money was intirely unknown there; and that, by consequence, their gold was



was all a dead stock, being of no other use but for ornament and ostentation, as so much furniture reserved from father to son by many powerful kings, who continually exhausted their mines to form this heap of vessels and statues for the ornament of their palaces and temples; whereas our gold is all in circulation and traffic. We cut ours into a thousand bits, cast it into as many forms, and scatter and disperse it a thousand ways. Let us only suppose that our kings had, in like manner amassed all the gold they could collect in several ages, and have let it lain idle by them.

The people of the kingdom of Mexico were somewhat more civilized, and greater artists than the other nations in that part of the world. They judged also, as we do, that the universe was near its period; and they looked upon the desolation we brought amongst them as a sign of it. They believed the duration of the world

The Mexicans made the world to consist of five ages, and thought themselves to be in the last when the Spaniards came to extirpate them.

to be divided into five ages, under five successive suns, four of which had already finished their career, and what now gave them light was the fifth. The first sun perished, say they, with all other creatures, by an universal deluge. The second by the fall of the firmament upon us, which suffocated every thing living; and in this age they place the giants, whose bones they shewed to the Spaniards; according to the proportion of which the stature of men amounted to twenty hands high. The third sun, they say was annihilated by fire, which burnt and consumed every thing. The fourth by a commotion of air and wind, which even threw down several mountains; at which time men did not die, but were transformed into baboons. What impressions will not the laziness of human credulity admit! After the extinction of this fourth sun, the world, say they, lay twenty-five years in continual darkness; in the fifteenth year of which were created a man and a woman, who renewed the human race. Upon a certain day, ten years after this, the sun appeared newly created, and from this day begins their computation of years. The third day after it was created, the



the ancient Gods died, and new ones have been born every day since. After what manner they think this last fun will perish my author has not learnt. But their calculation of this fourth change agrees with the great conjunction of the planets, which, eight hundred and odd years ago, as the astrologers compute, produced many great alterations and innovations in the world.

The magnificent works in Peru, superior to those of Greece, Rome, and Egypt.

As to pomp and magnificence, neither Greece, Rome, nor Egypt, can, either for utility, difficulty, or grandeur, compare any of their works with the road made in Peru, by the kings of that country, from the city of Quito to that of Cusco (three hundred leagues in length) it being strait, even, twenty-five paces in breadth, paved, and inclosed on both sides with noble high walls; along the innermost of which two brooks are continually running, with beautiful trees, named Moly, on their banks. In this work, where they met with rocks and mountains, they cut through and levelled them, and filled up the chasms with stone and lime. At the end of every day's journey there are fine palaces, furnished with provisions, cloaths, and arms, as well for travellers as for soldiers that pass that way. In my estimation of this work, I have computed the difficulty, which is particularly considerable in that place. They did not build with any stones less than such as were ten foot square, which they had no other way to transport but by dragging them along by the strength of their arms; nor did they know so much as the art of scaffolding, nor had they any other way to go to work but to raise the ground with the building, taking away the earth when the whole was erected.

The last king of Peru carried in a chair of gold to the midst of the field of battle.

We return now to our coaches. Instead of these, or any other vehicles, they were carried upon men's shoulders. The last king of Peru, on the day that he was taken, was thus carried upon poles or staves of gold, and sitting in a chair of gold; to the middle of the field of battle. As fast as these chairmen were killed in the attempt to dismount him (for they were determined



terminated to take him alive,) others strove to supply their room; so that they could never get him down, what slaughter soever they made of those chairmen, till he was seized and pulled to the ground by a man on horse-back.

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## C H A P. VII.

### *Of the Inconvenience of Greatness.*

**S**INCE we cannot attain to it, let us take our revenge by railing at it: yet to find fault with a thing is not absolutely railing at it, there being some faults in all things how beautiful and desirable soever. In general, greatness has this evident advantage, that it lets itself down at pleasure, and has almost the choice of either condition. For a man does not fall from all heights, but may come down from the greatest part of them without falling. Indeed, it seems to me that we value it at too high a rate, and that we also overvalue the resolution of those whom we have either seen or heard to have contemned it, or let themselves down from it of their own accord. Its essence is not so manifestly commodious but it may be refused without a miracle. I find it a very hard thing to bear misfortunes; but to be content with a moderate fortune, and to avoid greatness, is a thing, in my opinion, of very little trouble. This is a virtue, methinks, to which I, who am no conjurer, could arrive at without much struggle. What then ought they to do who would even put into the balance the glory attending this refusal, wherein there may be more ambition lurking than even in the desire and enjoyment of greatness? Forasmuch as ambition never conducts itself better, according to its own manner, than by a path which is unfrequented, and out of the road.

He who knows what greatness is, may avoid it without much trouble.

I spur



Montaigne was  
never ambitious  
of very high  
preferment.

I spur up my courage to patience; but slacken its rein towards desire. I have as much to wish for as another; and allow my wishes as much liberty and indiscretion; but yet it never was my lot to wish for either empire or royalty, nor for the eminency of those high and commanding fortunes. I do not aim that way. I love myself too well. When I think of growing greater, it is but very moderately, and by a constrained and timorous increase, such as is proper for me, in resolution, in prudence, in health, beauty, and even in wealth. But that reputation, and that so mighty authority oppresses my imagination. And, quite contrary to some others, I would, perhaps, rather chuse to be the second or third man in Perigord than the first in Paris; at least, without lying, be the third than the first officer in Paris. I would neither dispute with a porter at the gate, a wretch whom I knew not, nor make crowds open to adore me as I pass. I have been trained up to a middle rank in life, as well by my inclination as my fortune; and have made it appear, by the whole course of my behaviour and undertakings, that I have rather avoided than otherwise to climb above the degree of fortune to which I was born. Every natural constitution is equally just and easy. I have, therefore, so mean a spirit that I measure not good fortune by its height, but by its easy attainment.

His preference of  
a quiet life to  
that of Regulus,  
who was so ad-  
mirable for his  
fortitude in the  
greatest perils.

But if I have not a heart great enough, I am made amends by an open heart, which enjoins me boldly to proclaim its weakness. Were I desired to compare the life of L. Thorius Balbus, a fine gentleman, learned, healthy; a man of an excellent understanding, and abounding in all manner of conveniencies and pleasures, leading a tranquil life, and all after his own way, with a soul duly prepared to meet death, and fortified against superstition, pain, and other incumbrances of human necessity, dying at last in battle with his sword drawn for the defence of his country; should I compare his with the life of M. Regulus, so grand and sublime as every one knows it was, together  
with



with his admirable exit; the one without name, without dignity, the other exemplary and wonderfully glorious, I would doubtless say as Cicero did \*, could I speak as well as he. But, were I to set them together in my own phrase, I would say also that the life of the former is as much within my capacity and within my desire, which I make conformable to my capacity, as the latter is beyond it; that I could not approach the last without veneration, but to the first I would readily attain by habit.

Return we now to our temporal greatness, from which we have digressed. I neither like to command nor be commanded.

He loved not to command nor be commanded.

Otanez, one of the seven who had a right to lay claim to the kingdom of Persia, did, as I would readily have done myself, i. e. † he gave up to his competitors his right of attaining to it, either by election or by lot, provided that he and his might live in the empire free of all subjection and obedience, that to the ancient laws excepted; and that they might enjoy all liberty that was not to the prejudice thereof, he having as great an aversion to command as to obey.

The most painful and difficult employment in the world is, in my opinion, worthily to discharge the office of a king. I excuse more of their failings than men commonly do, in consideration of the vast weight of their function, which really astonishes me. It is difficult for such boundless power to preserve any decorum. Yet so it is that, even to those who are not of the most happy disposition, it is a singular incitement to virtue to be stationed in such a place, where whatever good you do is recorded, and placed to account, where the least bene-

Kings the more excusable because their office is one of the most difficult.

\* Cicero, from whom Montaigne has taken this parallel, plainly gives the preference to Regulus. Thorius, he says, wallowed in pleasures of every kind, and was a contemner of the sacrifices and temples of his country: that he was a handsome man, perfectly healthy, and so valiant that he died in battle for the cause of the republic; insomuch, adds Cicero, that I dare not name the man who was preferable to him; but virtue shall speak for me, who will not hesitate a moment to give M. Regulus the preference, and to proclaim him the more happy man. *De Finib. Bon et Mal. lib. ii. cap. 20.*

† Herodot. lib. iii. p. 222, 223.



faction extends to so many men, and where your talent, like that of preachers, chiefly addresses itself to the people, who are not very nice judges, easily deceived and easily satisfied. There are few things wherein we can give a sincere judgment, because there are few wherein we have not in some sort a particular interest. Superiority and inferiority, command, and subjection, are naturally liable to envy and cavil, and must necessarily be continually incroaching upon one another. I believe neither the one nor the other touching its respective rights; let reason, therefore, which is the inflexible and dispassionate, when we can find it, determine the case. It is scarce a month ago that I turned over two Scotch authors who contended with each other upon this point. He who takes the part of the people renders the condition of a king worse than that of a carter; and the writer for the monarch lifts him up some degrees above almighty God in sovereignty and power.

Great men are excluded from the exercises of honour and valour.

Now the inconveniency of greatness, which I have here taken upon me to consider upon some occasion that lately put it into my head, is this: there is not, perhaps, any thing more pleasant in men's dealings with one another than their competitions and contentions, through an emulation of honour and valour, either in the exercises of the body or of the mind, wherein sovereign greatness has no real share. Indeed I have often thought, that, out of pure respect, men have used princes injuriously and disdainfully in that particular. For the very thing I was vehemently disgusted at, when a lad, was to see, that those who performed their exercises with me forbore to do their best, as if they thought me unworthy of such effort; and this is what we see happen to them daily, every one thinking himself unworthy to contend with them. If we discover that they have the least passion to get the better, there is not a man that will not make it his business to give them the victory, and that will not chuse to betray his own honour rather than offend theirs. They employ no more force in it than is necessary to contribute to their honour. What share then have they in an engagement wherein every one is of their side?



side? Methinks I see those paladins of the ancient times presenting themselves to the jousts and tournaments, with their bodies and armour enchanted. Brissou, running against Alexander, purposely committed a fault \* in his career, for which Alexander chid him, but he ought to have whipped him. Upon this account Carneades said, “ † That the sons of princes learned nothing right but “ how to ride the managed horse, by reason that in all “ other exercises every one bends and yields to them; “ but a horse, being neither a flatterer nor a courtier, “ makes no more scruple to sting the son of a king than “ the brat of a porter.” Homer was forced to consent that Venus, so perfect, soft, and delicate a beauty, should be wounded at the battle of Troy, for the sake of ascribing courage and boldness to her, qualities never known in those who are exempt from danger. The gods are made to be angry, to fear, to run away, to be jealous, to grieve, and to be transported with passion, to honour them with the virtues that amongst us are composed of those imperfections. He that does not participate in the hazard and difficulty, cannot pretend to an interest in the honour and pleasure that attend hazardous actions. It is pity, you should have such a power that all things give way to you. Your fortune throws society and good fellowship too far from you, and plants you in too great a solitude. That easiness, that mean facility of making all things stoop to you, is an enemy to all manner of pleasure. It is sliding, not going; it is sleeping, not living. Conceive a man accompanied with omnipotence, you plunge him in an abyss, and put him under a necessity of begging molestation and opposition from you as an alms. His being and his welfare are in a state of indigence. The good qualities of kings are dead and lost, for these are only to be perceived by comparison, and we put them

\* Plutarch, in his treatise, *How a Flatterer may be distinguished from a Friend*, where this man, who suffered Alexander to conquer him, is called Crissou instead of Brissou as it is spelt in all the editions of Montaigne that I have met with. Indeed, in Plutarch's tract, entitled, *Of the Satisfaction or Tranquility of the Mind*, it is spelt *Brissou*, in the Paris edit. fol. anno 1624. But it is an error of the press, because in the Latin version, which accompanies it, Xylander has put Crison.

† Plutarch, *ibid.* chap. 15.



out of the way of it. Their ears are so tingled with a continual uniform approbation, that they have scarce any knowledge of true praise. Have they to do with the greatest fool of all their subjects? They have no way to take advantage of him: by his saying, "it is because he is my king," he thinks he has said enough to imply that he therefore suffered himself to be overcome. This quality stifles and confuses the other true and essential qualities, which are sunk deep in the kingship, and leaves them nothing to set themselves off but actions that are actually contiguous and subservient to royalty, viz. the functions of their office. It is so much to be a king, that he is only so by that very denomination. This strange lustre that surrounds him, conceals him, and robs us of the view of him. Our sight is thereby repelled and dissipated, being engrossed and dazzled by this glaring splendor. The senate awarded the prize of eloquence to Tiberius, but he refused it, as thinking that, though the award had been ever so just, he could not have a true relish of it from a judgment so restrained.

How the faults of kings are hid from their eyes. As we yield them all the advantages of honour, so do we sooth and give a sanction to their very defects and vices, not only by approbation, but even by imitation. Every one of Alexander's attendants carried their heads on one side as he did. And the flatterers of \* Dionysius ran foul of one another in his presence, stumbled at, and kicked up every thing in their way, to denote that they were as purblind as he. Even ruptures have sometimes been a recommendation to favour. I have actually seen deafness affected; and, where the sovereign hated his wife, Plutarch † observed that the courtiers actually divorced theirs, whom they loved. And, what is yet more, uncleanness, and all manner of dissolution, disloyalty, blasphemy, cruelty, heresy, superstition, irreligion, effeminacy, and

\* Plutarch, Of the Difference between the Flatterer and the Friend.

† Plutarch only says, that he knew a man who, because his friend divorced his wife, turned away his wife also, whom, nevertheless, he went to visit, and sent for sometimes privately to his house, which was discovered by the very wife of his friend. Plutarch, Of the Difference betwixt the Flatterer and the Friend, chap. 8. of Amyot's translation.



worse crimes, if worse there can be, have at times been the reigning fashion; and by an example yet more pernicious than that of the flatterers of Mithridates, who, \* because their sovereign pretended to the honour of being a good physician, came to him to have incisions and caustics applied to their bodies; for those others suffered their souls, a more noble and delicate part, to be cauterised. But, to conclude the subject I began with, Adrian, the emperor, disputing with the philosopher Favorinus about the meaning of a word, Favorinus soon yielded him the point; for which his friends blaming him, "You talk simply," said he, "would you make me believe that he who commands thirty legions, is not a man of more learning than I am?" † Augustus wrote verses against Asinius Pollio; "And I," said Pollio, "say nothing, for it is not prudent to take up the pen against him who has power to proscribe." And these were both in the right. For Dionysius, because he could ‡ not equal Philoxenus in poetry, and Plato § in reasoning, condemned the one to the quarries, and sent the other to the isle of Ægina to be sold for a slave.

\* Plutarch, *ibid.* chap. 13. † *Ælii Spartiani Adrianus Cæsar*, p. 7 & 8, *Hist. Aug.* ‡ Or rather because he was not able to bear the slight opinion which Philoxenus shewed of his poetry. Diodorus of Sicily; lib. xi. cap. 2. says, that one day, at supper-time, as they were reading some worthless poems of this tyrant, that excellent poet Philoxenus, being charged to give his opinion of them, was too free in his answer to please Dionysius, for which the tyrant was so much incensed against him that he ordered him to be sent immediately to the quarries. § Montaigne is mistaken here with regard to Plato, who was sold a slave in the island of Ægina, by order of Dionysius the tyrant, because he had spoken too freely to him; as Diodorus of Sicily says positively, lib. xv. cap. 2. and more particularly also Diog. Laert. in the life of Plato, lib. iii. sect. 18, 19. In these two last notes the fault I have found with Montaigne I might, indeed, have as well placed to the account of Plutarch, who says the very same thing as Montaigne in his treatise *Of Contentment, or Peace of the Mind*, chap. 12. yet I cannot but think that Plutarch has here been guilty of some inaccuracy of expression.



## C H A P. VIII.

*Of the Art of Discoursing.*

The end of punishments ; and how the vices of some men may serve for instruction to others.

**I**T is the custom of our justice to condemn some for a warning to others. To condemn them for no other reason but because they have done amiss, were downright stupidity, as Plato says, for what is done cannot be undone ; but it is to the end they may offend no more, and that others may not commit the like offence. We do not reform the man whom we hang, but we reform others by him. I do the same, My errors are sometimes natural, and neither to be corrected nor remedied ; but the benefit which virtuous men do the public, by making themselves imitated, I may do, perhaps, in making my conduct avoided.

*Nonne vides Albi ut malè vivat filius, utque  
Barrus inops ? magnum documentum, ne patriam rem  
Perdere quis velit \*.*

Don't you behold the wealthy Albus' son,  
How wretchedly he lives, how he's undone !  
There's Barrus too, how shabby is he grown !  
Barrus, the greatest rake of all the town :  
A good instruction for young heirs, that they  
Should not their patrimony fool away.

Whilst I proclaim and condemn my own imperfections, another person will be taught to fear them. The parts that I most esteem in myself derive more honour from accusing, than from recommending myself ; which is the reason I the oftner relapse and stick to them. But, when all is said and done, a man never speaks of himself without loss. Self-condemnation is always believed, but self-praise never. There may perhaps, be some of my own constitution, who instruct me better by contrariety than by simi-

\* Hor. lib. i. sat. 4. ver. 109, &c.



litude, and more by avoiding than imitating me. This was that ſort of diſcipline which the elder Cato had in his thoughts, when he ſaid, that “ wiſe men have more to “ learn of fools, than fools of wiſe men :” and that ancient player upon the harp, who, Pauſanias ſaid, uſed to compel his ſcholars to go and hear one that lodged oppoſite to him, who played very ill, that they might thereby learn to hate his diſcords and falſe meaſures. The horror of cruelty more inclines me to mercy than any example of clemency could poſſibly do. A good riding-maſter does not ſo much mend my ſeat in the ſaddle as an attorney, or a Venetian gondolier on horſeback ; and a ſorry ſpeaker reforms my language better than a good one. The ſilly look of another perſon always advertiſes and adviſes me ; and that which is pungent awakes and rouses much better than what is pleaſing. It is fit time for us to reform the backward way by diſagreement rather than by agreement, by diſcord rather than accord. As I learn little by good examples, I make uſe of bad, which are very common. I have endeavoured to render myſelf as agreeable as I ſee others offensive, as conſtant as I ſee others fickle, as affable as I ſee others rough, as good as I ſee others wicked ; but I propoſed to myſelf meaſures invincible.

The moſt fruitful and natural exerciſe of the mind, in my opinion, is converſation, the uſe of which I find to be more agreeable than any other exerciſe in life. For this reaſon, were I now forced to make my choice at this inſtant, I think I would agree rather to loſe my fight than my hearing, or my ſpeech. The Athenians and the Romans alſo held this exerciſe in great honour in their academies : and the Italians to this day retain ſome footſteps of it to their great advantage.

*The uſefulneſs  
of converſation.*

The ſtudy of books is a languid, feeble motion, that does not warm, whereas converſation at once inſtructs and exerciſes. If I diſcourſe with a man of ſtrong ſenſe, and a ſhrewd diſputant, he ſmites me hip and thigh, and goads

*It is an exerciſe  
more inſtructive  
than the ſtudy  
of books.*



goads me on the right and left, and his imaginations give vigour to mine. Envy, glory, contention, stimulate, and raise me above myself; whereas a unison of judgment is a quality that is a perfect nuisance in conversation. But as the mind gathers strength, by the communication of vigorous and regular understandings, it is not to be expressed how much it loses and degenerates by the continual correspondence and company which we keep with such whose imagination are vulgar and distempered. There is no contagion which spreads like that. I have sufficient reason to know the evil of it by dear experience. I love to discourse and dispute; but it is with few men only, and for my own sake; for to be put up as a spectacle before a great assembly, and to make a parade and boasting of a man's flow of wit and words, is, I think, very unbecoming a person of honour.

Not to be able to bear with nonsense is a very troublesome distemper of the mind.

Nonsense is a contemptible quality, but not to be able to bear with it, and to fret and vex at it as I do, is another sort of disease, altogether as troublesome as nonsense: and this is the very thing of which

I will now accuse myself. I enter into a conference and dispute with great freedom and ease, forasmuch as opinion meets in me with a soil very unfit for penetration, and too hard for it to take any deep root. No propositions astonish me, no belief offends me, how contrary soever it be to my own. There is no fancy so frivolous and extravagant that does not seem to me to be very suitable to the product of the human understanding. As for such of us, who deprive our judgment of the right of making decrees, we look upon the various opinions with indifference; and if we do not incline our judgments to them, yet we readily lend an ear to them. Where one scale of the balance is quite empty, I let the other waver under the dreams of an old woman: and I think myself excusable if I chuse the odd number, Thursday rather than Friday; if I had rather be the twelfth or fourteenth than the thirteenth at table; if I had rather, on a journey, see a hare run by me than cross my



my road, and that my stocking be put on my left foot first. All such whimsies as are current about us, deserve least to be hearkened unto. As to me they are all mere vanity, and that is what they really import. Moreover, vulgar and casual opinions, considered in their weight, are, indeed, something more than nothing in nature. And he who will not suffer himself to proceed so far, falls, perhaps, into the vice of obstinacy, for the sake of avoiding that of superstition. The contradictions of judgments, therefore, neither offend nor alter me; they only awake and exercise me. We shun correction, whereas we ought to put ourselves in the way of it, especially when it comes by way of conference, and not of authority. As to every opposition, we do not consider whether it be just, but how we shall, right or wrong, disengage ourselves from it. Instead of extending our arms we thrust out our claws. I could suffer myself to be roughly handled by my friends telling me that I am a fool and a dreamer. I love to hear gentlemen speak, as they think, with courage. We must fortify and harden our organ of hearing against this ceremonious sound of words. I love a strong and manly familiarity and conversation; a friendship that is pleased with the sharpness and vigour of its communication, as love is with biting and scratching. It is not vigorous nor generous enough if it be not quarrelsome, if it be civilized and artificial, if it treads gingerly, and is afraid of a shock. *Neque enim disputari sine reprehensione potest* \*. “Nor can there be any disputation without contradiction.” When I am contradicted, it rouses my attention but not my indignation. I incline towards him who contradicts and instructs me. The cause of truth ought to be the common cause of both the one and the other. What answer will he make? The passion of anger has already given a blow to his judgment, Anguish has taken possession of it before reason. It would be of service that our disputes were decided by wagers; that there might be a material mark put upon what we lost, to the end

\* Cic de Fimibus Bon. & Mal. lib. i.



that we might keep an account of it, and that my man might tell me, "my ignorance and obstinacy cost me last year a hundred crowns at several times." I cherish and care for truth in what hand soever I find it; I cheerfully surrender to it; I open my conquered arms to it as far off as I can see it approaching, and I take a pleasure in being reprov'd, provided it be not with an air too deriding and imperious. And I accommodate myself to my accusers more frequently for civility sake than for the sake of amendment, chusing to gratify and encourage a freedom to admonish me, by my ready submission to it. Nevertheless it is hard to bring the men of my time to it. They have not the courage to correct, because they cannot bear to be corrected themselves. And they always speak with dissimulation in one another's presence. I take so great a pleasure in being judged and known, that it is in a manner indifferent to me in which of the two forms I am so. My imagination so often contradicts and condemns itself, that it is all one to me if another do it, especially considering that I grant no more authority than what I think fit to his reproof. But I am angry with the man who is so surly, which I know some are, as to be sorry for his admonition if it be not credited, and takes it for an affront if it be not immediately followed. As Socrates always received the contradictions to his arguments with a smile, it may be said that his strength of reason was the cause, and that the advantage being certain of falling on his side, he accepted them as matter of new victory. Nevertheless we see, on the contrary, that there is nothing in the case that renders our sentiment so delicate as an inclination to pre-eminence, and a disdain of the adversary; and that, therefore, the weaker disputant has reason to take in good part, those contradictions that correct and set him right. In earnest, I rather chuse to keep company with those who gall me than those who fear me. It is an insipid and a hurtful pleasure to have to do with people who admire and make way for us. Antisthenes commanded his children "never to take it kindly, or as a favour, from any man who

"com-



commended them \*. I find I am much prouder of a victory which I gain over myſelf, when in the very heat of the contention, I ſurrender to the ſtrength of my adverſary's argument, than I feel pleaſure in a victory which I obtain over him by means of his weakneſs. In ſhort, I receive and admit of all manner of attacks that are direct, how weak ſoever; but I am quite out of patience with thoſe that are not made in form. I little care what the ſubject is; the opinions are all one to me, and the victory is to me a thing almoſt indifferent. I can argue a whole day together peaceably, if the debate be carried on with order. I do not require ſtrength and ſubtility ſo much as method; I mean the order which is every day obſerved in the wranglings of ſhepherds and ſhop-boys, but never among us. If they ſtart from the ſubject it is uncivil in them; and yet it is no more than what we do ourſelves: but their tumult and impatience does not carry them from their point. They purſue the thread of their argument. If they prevent, and do not ſtay for one another, they at leaſt underſtand one another. Any one answers too well for me, if he answer what I ſay. But when the diſpute is confuſed and irregular, I quit the ſubſtance, and adhere to the form with anger and indiſcretion, and fall into a teſty, malicious, and imperious way of diſputing, of which I am afterwards aſhamed. It is impoſſible to deal ſincerely with a fool. My judgment is not only depraved under the hand of ſo impetuous a maſter, but my conſcience alſo,

Out diſputes ought to be prohibited and puniſhed as well as other verbal crimes. ‡ What vice do they not create and accumulate, being always governed and commanded by paſſion? We firſt

Diſputes that are ill conducted ought to be prohibited; the ill conſequences of them,

quarrel

\* Plutarch, Of falſe Shame, chap. 12. Ὁ Ἀντιſθενὴς Ἡρακλῆς παρῆναι τοῖς παισὶ διακελευόμενος μὴδεὶ χάριν ἔχειν ἰπαινῆν αὐτῷ. Montaigne has miſ-founded this Antifthenius, or Antifthenes, as the Latin tranſlation of Plutarch calls him, with the chief of the Cynic ſect, who never had the ſurname of Hercules, which Plutarch gives to Antifthenius, and is conſtantly called Antifthenes.

‡ The deſcription which Montaigne gives, from this place to the mark †, in the next page, of the faults that commonly attend our diſputes, is



quarrel with the arguments, and then with the ~~men~~. We learn to dispute purely for the sake of contradicting; and, whilst every one contradicts, and is contradicted, it falls out that all that is got by the dispute is the loss and annihilation of the truth. Plato, therefore, in his Republic, prohibits this exercise to fools and ill-bred people. To what end do you go about to inquire into a subject of one who knows not any thing that is worth knowing? It is doing no injury to the subject when a man leaves it in order to see which way to treat it. I do not mean a way that is artful and scholastic, but one that is natural and obvious to a solid understanding. What will it be in the end? One goes to the east, the other to the west. They lose the main point, and scatter it in a crowd of incidents. After storming for an hour, they know not what they are looking for. One is low, the other high, and the third sideling. One is taken with a word and a simile: another is no longer sensible of the opposition made to him, he is so engaged in his pursuit, and thinks of following his own course, and not yours: another, finding himself too weak to hold the argument, fears all, refuses all, and at the very beginning, mixes and confounds the subject, or, in the very height of the dispute, stops short and grows silent by a peevish ignorance, affecting a haughty contempt, or a silly modesty of avoiding contention. This man, provided he strikes, cares not how much he lays himself open. The other counts his very words, and weighs them for reasons. Another is beholden only to his (Stentor-like) voice, and his lungs. Here is one that draws inferences against himself, and another that deafens you with prefaces, and impertinent digressions †. Another falls into downright railing, and picks a quarrel for nothing, in order to get

very just, and very agreeably expressed. Pere Bouhours was so pleased with it, that he has inserted it almost verbatim in lib. iii. of his *Art de Penser*, chap. 20. § 7. but without directly ascribing the honour of it to Montaigne, whom he only points out by the vague character of the Celebrated Author; whereas he ought most certainly to have named Montaigne expressly, especially after having just criticised him in the same chapter with great severity, to call it no worse, when he not only quoted his words, but named him without any scruple.

clear



clear of the company and converſation of a wit that is too hard for him. This laſt looks not into the reaſon of things, but draws a line of circumvallation about you, with the logic of his clauſes, and the rules of his art.

Who now does not enter into a diſtrult of the ſciences, and doubt whether he can reap any ſolid advantage from them for the neceſſities of life, conſidering the uſe we put them to. *Nihil ſanantibus literis* \*, as Seneca calls it. Who has got underſtanding by logic? Where are all its fine promiſes? *Nec ad melius vivendum, nec ad commodius differendum*; “it neither makes a man live better, nor “diſcourſe more pertinently.” Is there more balderdaſh in the brawls of fiſh-women than in the public diſputes of the men of this profeſſion? I would rather that a ſon of mine ſhould learn the language of the taverns than the babble of the ſchools. Take a maſter of arts, and diſcourſe with him, does he not make us ſenſible of this artificial excellency? Does he not captivate the women, and ſuch ignoramuſes as we are, by the admiration of the ſtrength of his reaſons, and the beauty of his method? Does he not govern and perſuade us as he will? Why does a man, who has ſo great advantage in matter and management, mix railing, indiſcretion, and rage, in his diſputations? Strip him of his gown, his hood, and his Latin; let him not batter our ears with Aristotle, in his *puris naturalibus*, you will take him for one of us, or worſe. By that complication and confuſion of language with which they overpower us, they appear in the light of jugglers, whoſe feats of activity ſtrike and impoſe upon our ſenſes, but do not at all ſhock our belief; and, their ſlight of hand excepted, they do nothing but what is common and mean. They are not the leſs fools for their being more learned; I love and honour knowledge as much as they who poſſeſs it; and, if a right uſe be made of it, it is the moſt noble

The ſtrange abuſe that is made of ſcience.

\* Seneca, ep. 59.



and powerful acquisition of mortals: but in those (of whom there is an infinite number) who establish their sufficiency and value upon that basis, who appeal from their understanding to their memory, *sub alienâ umbrâ latentes* †, and can do nothing but by book, I hate it; if I may venture to say it, something worse than stupidity itself. In my country, and in my time, learning has improved fortunes sufficiently, but the mind not at all. If it meets with dull souls it overcharges and suffocates them, leaving them a crude and undigested mass; but, as for such as are free of all clogs, it readily purifies and subtilizes them. It is a thing of a quality almost indifferent; a very useful accomplishment to a sublime soul, but to others pernicious and mischievous; or rather a thing of very precious use, that will not suffer itself to be purchased at a low rate: In some hands it is a sceptre, in others a rattle.

It is method and management, that gives a value to disputation.

But to proceed: what greater victory do you hope for, than to convince your enemy that he is not able to encounter you? When you get the better of your position, it is truth that wins; when you get the advantage of order and method, it is you that win. I am of opinion that, in Plato and Xenophon, Socrates disputes more for the sake of the disputants than of the dispute, and more to instruct Euthydemus and Protagoras in the knowledge of their impertinence than in the impertinence of their art. He grasps at the first subject, like one who has a more profitable aim than to explain it, namely to clear the understandings which he takes upon him to cultivate and exercise. It is our proper business to be stirring, and upon the hunt after truth; and, if we prosecute the chase ill and impertinently, we are inexcusable. To fail in seizing, it is another thing. For we are born to search after truth, though it is the province of a greater power to possess it. It is not, as Democritus said, concealed in the unfathom-

† Seneca, epist. 33. i. e. We are always translators, and never authors.



~~ble~~ deeps; but rather elevated to an infinite height in the divine knowledge. The world is but a school of inquiry. It is not who shall enter the field, but who shall perform the best courses. He may as well play the fool who speaks the truth, as he who utters a falsehood; for we are upon the manner, not the matter of speaking. It is my humour to regard the form as much as the substance, and the advocate as much as the cause, according to the rule laid down by Alcibiades. And I amuse myself every day in reading authors, without minding their learning; their method being what I look for, not their subject. Just so too I hunt after the conversation of some celebrated genius; not that he may teach me, but that I may know him; and that then, if he be worth it, I may imitate him. It is in every man's power to speak truly, but the talent of a few only to speak methodically, prudently, and fully. By consequence, the falsity which proceeds from ignorance, does not offend me, but the folly of it. I have broke off several advantageous bargains by reason of the impertinent wrangling of those with whom I treated. I am not moved once in a year at the faults of those over whom I have any power; but for the stupidity and obstinacy of their allegations, and their foolish and brutish excuses, we are every day ready to seize one another by the collar. They neither understand what is said, nor why, and answer accordingly, which is enough to make a man mad. I never feel any severe shock in my head but when it is knocked by another head; and am more ready to compound for the crimes of my domestics than their rashness, impertinence and folly. Let them do less, provided they are capable of doing it right. You live in hopes of warming their affection to you; but from a blockhead, there is nothing worth to be had, or hoped for.

But what if I take things otherwise than they are? It is possible I may; and, therefore, I accuse my own impatience; and hold, in the first place, that

A great fault in a man not to be able to bear with the follies of others.

such impatience is as vicious in him who is in the right as in him who is in the wrong. For it is always a tyrannical



nical journeys not to be able to bear a form different from one's own. Besides, there really is not a greater, more constant, and more unaccountable folly than to be moved and provoked at the follies of mankind; for it chiefly makes us quarrel with ourselves, and the ancient philosopher never wanted occasion for his tears whilst he considered himself. Miso\*, one of the seven sages, who was of the temper of Timon and Democritus, being asked, "What he laughed at, being alone?" Made answer, "For the very reason because I laugh alone." How many silly things, in my opinion, do I say and answer every day of my life; and then how many more according to the opinion of others? If I bite my own lips at it, what must others do? In short, we must live among the living, and let the river run under the bridge without our care, or at least without our being disturbed. To speak the truth, how comes it that we can meet a man with a hump-back, or any other deformity, without being angry at it; and cannot bear to meet with a person who is of a wrong head, without putting ourselves into a passion? This criminal journey sticks more to the judge than to the crime. Let us always have this saying of Plato in our mouths, "Do not I think things wrong because I am wrong myself? Am not I myself in fault? May not my admonition rebound upon myself?" A wise and divine check this, which lashes the most universal and common error of mankind. Not only the reproaches that we cast upon one another, but our reasons also; our arguments and controversies are generally liable to be retorted upon us, and we are hurt with our own weapons. Of this antiquity has left me very grave examples. It was said ingeniously, and very pertinently by Erasmus, in his Adages, *Stercus cuique suum bene olet*. We see nothing behind us. We expose ourselves to laughter a hundred times a day, while we laugh at our neighbour, and detest in others the very faults that are more conspicuous in ourselves, and which we admire with wonderful impudence and inadvert-

\* Diog. Laert. in the life of Miso, lib. i. § 108.



tency. It was but yeſterday that I ſaw a man of good ſenſe pleaſantly and juſtly ridiculing the folly of another, who batters the ears of all companies with the catalogue of his genealogies and alliances, above half of them falſe (for they whoſe titles are moſt dubious and uncertain, are the moſt apt to fall upon ſuch ridiculous topics), and, at the ſame time, had he looked at home, he would have found, that he was altogether as intemperate and impertinent in publiſhing and crying up the pedigree of his wife. O! the impertinent aſſurance with which the wife ſees herſelf armed by her own huſband! If he underſtood Latin we would ſay to him,

*Ageſis hæc non inſanit ſatis ſuâ ſponte, inſtiga \*.*

If of herſelf ſhe be not mad enough,  
Be ſure to urge her to the utmoſt proof.

I do not ſay that no man ſhould accuſe who is not clear himſelf; for then the one would ever accuſe, not even he that is clear from the ſame ſort of ſtain; but I mean, that while our judgment falls upon another whoſe name is then in queſtion, it does not exempt us from an internal and ſevere juriſdiction. It is an office of charity that the man who cannot reclaim himſelf from a vice, ſhould, nevertheless, endeavour to remove it in another, in whom, perhaps, it may not have taken ſo deep and malignant a root. Neither do I think it a pertinent answer to him, who admoniſhes me of my fault, to tell him that he is guilty of the ſame. What does this ſignify? The admonition is, notwithstanding true and uſeful. If we had a good noſe our ordure would be the more offensive to us, becauſe it is our own. And Socrates is of opinion, that whoever ſhould find himſelf, his ſon, and a ſtranger, guilty of any violence and wrong, ought to begin with himſelf, to preſent himſelf firſt to the ſentence of juſtice; and, in order to purge himſelf, to implore the aſſiſtance of the hangman. The ſon ſhould take place next, and then the ſtranger. If this precept ſeem a little too ſevere, he ought, at leaſt,

\* Ter. Andria act iv. ſcene 2. ver. 9.



to present himself the first to the sting of his own conscience.

That which strikes our senses determines our judgments. The gravity, robe, and fortune of the speaker gives weight to a thousand silly things that fall from his lips.

The senses which perceive things only by external accidents, are our proper and first judges; and it is no wonder if, in all the parts of our social duty, there is so perpetual and universal a mixture of ceremonies and superficial appearances; insomuch that therein consists the best and most effectual part of our civil government. It is still man with whom we have to do, whose condition is wonderfully corporeal. As for those who, of late years, have aimed to erect such a contemplative and immaterial exercise of religion for us, let them not wonder if there be some who think it had slipped and vanished through their fingers, had it not continued among us as a mark, title, and instrument of division and partition, more than by itself. As in a conference, the gravity, the robe, and the fortune of the speaker, often give a reputation to vain and silly arguments; it is not to be presumed, but that a gentleman so attended, and that strikes such an awe, has some sufficiency in him that is more than common; and that the man to whom the king has given so many commissions and offices, a man of so solemn and supercilious a countenance, must be a person of greater abilities than another who salutes him at a great distance, and who has no employment. Not only the words, but the grimaces of those people, are considered, and put to the account, every one making it his business to give them some fine and solid construction. If they condescend to common conversation, and you offer them any thing but approbation and reverence, they knock you down with the authority of their experience: they have heard, they have seen, they have done so and so; you are crushed with examples. I would chuse to tell them that the fruit of a surgeon's experience is not the history of his practice, and his calling to mind that he has cured four people of the plague, and three of the gout, unless he knows how to extract something from it on which to form



form his judgment, and make us ſenſible that he is thereby become the wiſer in the uſe of his art. As in a concert of muſic, we do not hear a lute, a harpſichord, and a flute alone, but one blended harmony of all the inſtruments together. If they are improved by travelling, or by their poſts, their underſtanding will make it appear. It is not enough to count the experiments: they muſt be weighed and ſorted, digeſted and diſtilled, in order to extract the arguments and inferences which they carry with them. There were never ſo many hiſtorians. It is always good and uſeful to attend to them, for they furniſh us every where with excellent and commendable inſtructions from the magazine of their memory, which, doubtleſs, is of great importance to the ſupport of life. But it is not this we ſeek for now: we examine whether theſe relaters and collectors of things are commendable themſelves. I hate every kind of tyranny, both in words and deeds. I heartily ſet myſelf againſt thoſe vain circumſtances which deceive our judgment through the ſenſes; and, whiſt I narrowly obſerve theſe extraordinary grandees, I find, that at beſt, they are but men as others are.

*Rarus enim ferme ſenſus communis in illâ  
Fortunâ \*.*

————— for 'tis rare

If wealth uncommon, common ſenſe can ſhare.

Perhaps, we think them leſs than they are, by reaſon they undertake more, and make a greater parade, and at the ſame time do not perform what they engaged in. There muſt be more vigour and ſtrength in the bearer than the burden. He who has not exerted his full ſtrength, leaves you to gueſs whether he has ſtill more, and whether he has been tried to the utmoſt of what he is able to perform. He who ſinks under his burden, diſcovers the meaſure of his ſtrength, and the

Why great men  
appear ſome-  
times to be more  
fooliſh than they  
are in fact.

\* Juv. ſat. viii. ver. 73.



weakness of his shoulders. This is the reason why we find so many more silly mortals among the learned than there are others. Some of them would have made good husbandmen, good merchants, and good artificers: their stock of natural vigour was proportioned to those callings. Knowledge is a thing of great weight: they faint under it. Their genius has neither vigour nor dexterity enough to display and distribute this rich and powerful matter, nor to make use and advantage of it. It has no prevailing virtue but in a strong nature; and such natures are very rare. The weak ones, says Socrates, spoil the dignity of philosophy by handling it. It appears useless and vicious when it is not well placed\*. Thus it is that they spoil and make fools of themselves.

*Humani qualis simulator simius oris,  
Quem puer, arridens, pretioso stamine serum  
Velavit, nudasque nates ac terga reliquit,  
Ludibrium mensis †.*

Just like an ape that, sprung from mimic race,  
With various aspects counterfeits man's face,  
Which boys, for sport, with filken vest adorn,  
But leave its buttocks bare, to raise their scorn.

Nor is it enough for those who govern and command us, who have the world, as we say, in a string, to be men of common understanding, and to be able to do what we can; for if they are not very much superior to us they are far below us, since as they promise more they ought to perform more.

\* Like precious liquor which is spoiled if poured into a vessel that is not clean.

*Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcumque infundis, acescit.*  
Tainted vessels sour their contents.

† Claudian in Eutrop. lib. i. ver. 303, &c.

Yet



Yet ſilence in them not only gives them an air of reſpect and gravity, but often alſo conduces to their profit and ſervice.

Silence is of admirable uſe to the great.

Megabyſus going one day to ſee Apelles in his painting room, ſat ſtill a long time without ſpeaking a word; but at laſt, beginning to diſcourſe of his performances, he received this harſh reprimand from him: “ Whilſt  
“ thou waſt ſilent \* thou ſeemedſt to be ſome perſon of  
“ great account, becauſe of thy chains, and thy pompous  
“ appearance; but now that we have heard thee ſpeak,  
“ there is not the meaneſt boy in my work-ſhop that does  
“ not deſpiſe thee.” His magnificent habit, and his great ſtate, condemned his ignorance the more, while he talked of painting ſo impertinently. He ought to have ſaid nothing at all, and not betrayed his ſuperficial and conjectural knowledge. How many fools, in my time, have paſſed for men of prudence and capacity, by reaſon of their gravity and taciturnity !

Dignities and offices are of neceſſity conferred more by fortune than by merit, and kings are often blamed for it wrongfully. On the contrary, it is a wonder that they ſhould have ſo much fortune with ſo little ſkill.

The greateſt offices diſtributed by mere fortune.

*Principis eſt virtus maxima, noſſe ſuos †.*

No greater virtue can a prince enjoy  
Than well to know the men he would employ.

For nature has not given them a ſight that can extend to ſo many people, to diſcern where lies the preference, and to penetrate into our breſts, where our will and worth are beſt to be known. They muſt make choice of us by conjecture and trial; by our family, wealth, learning, and by the voice of the people; all very weak arguments. Whoever could find out a way to form a right judgment of this, and to chuſe men by reaſon, would, by ſo doing, eſtabliſh a perfect form of government.

\* Plutarch, in his treatiſe How to diſtinguiſh the flatterer from the friend, chap. 14.

† Martial. lib. viii. epig. 15. ver. ult.



Whether success be always a proof of sufficiency.

Nay more, he has brought this grand affair to a point. This is saying something, but not enough : for this opinion is justly admitted, that we are not to judge of counsels by events. The Carthaginians \* punished their generals for giving wrong advice, though it was attended with happy success ; and the people of Rome often refused triumph for great and very advantageous victories, because such success was not to be expected from the general's conduct. We commonly see in the transactions of the world, that fortune, to shew us her power in all things, and which takes pleasure in mortifying our presumption, not being able to make fools wise, she makes them happy in spite of virtue, and is forward to favour those operations which are most purely of her own plan. Hence it is that we daily see the simplest amongst us bring very great business, both public and private, to an issue : and as Siran- nez †, the Persian, made answer to those who wondered how his affairs succeeded so ill, considering that his deliberations were so wise : “ that he was sole master of his  
“ purposes, but the success of his affairs was wholly in the  
“ power of fortune ‡.” These may return the same answer, but with a contrary bias. Most of the affairs of this world are performed by accidents.

*Fata viam inveniunt* ||.

The Fates are sure to find a way.

The event often justifies very foolish conduct. Our interposition is as it were but a thing of course, and more commonly a consideration of use and example than of reason. Being amazed at the greatness of a deed, I have formerly been acquainted, by those who have performed

\* The Carthaginians are said to have hanged up their generals, though victorious, if the advice they acted by was wrong, Tit. Liv. lib. xxxviii. cap. 48. † Or rather Seirames Σεράμις, as we read it in Plutarch, in his prologue to the Remarkable sayings of the ancient kings, princes, and generals. ‡ Plutarch in the preface, above mentioned, to the Remarkable sayings. || Virgil. *Æneid*. lib. iii. ver. 395.



it, of their motives and their addreſs, and have found nothing therein but very ordinary advice; and the moſt common and cuſtomary are alſo, perhaps, the moſt ſure and convenient for practice, if not for ſhow. What if the plaineſt reaſons are the beſt planned? What if the loweſt, the baſeſt, and moſt beaten, are beſt adapted to affairs? In order to preſerve the authority of the counſels of kings, it is not neceſſary that prophane perſons ſhould participate in them, or ſee farther into them than the firſt out-line. My conſultation ſkims over the ſubject a little, and ſlightly conſiders it by the firſt appearances. The ſtreſs and main of the buſineſs I have been uſed to reſign to heaven.

*Permitte diviſ cætera \*.*

Leave to the gods the reſt.

Good fortune and ill fortune are, in my opinion, two ſovereign powers. It is a folly to think that human prudence can play the part of fortune; and vain is his attempt who preſumes to comprehend cauſes and conſequences, and to lead the progreſs of his deſign, as it were, by the hand: vain, eſpecially in military deliberations. There never was greater circumſpection and military prudence than has been ſometimes ſeen amongſt us. Could it be that men were afraid of perishing by the way, that they reſerved themſelves for the cataſtrophe of the game? I even affirm, that our very wiſdom and conſultation for moſt part, follow the conduct of chance. My will and my reaſon are ſometimes moved by one impulſe, and ſometimes by another; and many of thoſe movements govern themſelves without me. My reaſon has uncertain, and caſual agitations.

Chance has a  
very great  
ſhare in human  
actions.

\* Horat. lib. i. ode 9. ver. 9.



*Vertuntur species animorum, et pectora motus  
Nunc alios, alios, dum nubila ventus agebat,  
Concipiunt \*.*

Now one impression in their bosoms dwells ;  
Another, when the wind the clouds dispels.

If we but observe who are the men of the greatest sway in cities, and who do their own business best, we shall commonly find that they are men the least qualified. Women, children, and fools, have had the fortune to govern large dominions equally well with princes of the greatest abilities ; and we find, says Thucydides, that the stupid governors out-number those of better understandings. We ascribe the effects of their good fortune to their prudence.

——— *Ut quisque fortunâ utitur,  
Ita præcellet ; atque exinde sapere illum omnes dicimus †.*

According to their wealth all men we prize ;  
The rich are sure to be cried up for wise.

Wherefore I make no manner of scruple to declare, that events are slender proofs of our worth and capacity.

How we are  
imposed upon  
by rank.

Now I was upon this point, that there needs no more than to see a man raised to honour ; though we knew him but three days before to be a man of little consequence, yet an idea of his greatness and sufficiency insensibly steals upon our opinions ; and we persuade ourselves that as he increases in equipage and credit, so he increases in merit. We judge of him not according to his worth, but, as we do of counters, according to the prerogative of his rank. Let luck but turn, so that he fall again, and be mixed with the common crowd, every one inquires with astonishment into the cause of his having been raised so high. “ Is it he ? ” say they. “ Did he know no better when he was in place ? Are princes so easily satisfied ? “ Really we were in fine hands.” This very thing is what

\* Virg. *Geor.* lib. i. ver. 420, &c.  
ver. 13.

† Plautus in *Pseud.* act ii. sc. 3.



I have often seen in my time. Nay the mask of greatness, which is represented in comedies in some measure affects and deceives us. What I myself adore in kings, is the crowd of their adorers. All reverence and submission is due to them, except that of the understanding. My reason is not obliged to bow and bend, but my knees are. Melanthius, being asked what he thought of the tragedy of Dionysius, said, "I have not seen it, it is so obscured with language\*." And most of those, who judge of the discourses of great men, should say I did not understand its drift, it was so obscured with gravity, grandeur, and majesty. Antisthenes one day persuaded the Athenians to give order † that their asses might be as well employed in the tillage of their lands as their horses. The answer made to him was, that "the ass was an animal not born for such service." "It is all one," replied he, "you need only command it to be done; for the most ignorant and incapable men that you employed in your military orders, immediately become worthy by your employing them." This is much like the custom of many nations who, when they have chosen a king, canonize him; and do not think it enough to honour him, if they do not also adore him. The people of Mexico, after the ceremonies of his coronation are over, dare no more to look him in the face; but, as if they had made him a god, as well as a king, among the oaths they make him take, to maintain their religion, laws and liberties, to be valiant, just, and courteous; he swears also to make the sun travel with its usual light, to make the clouds distil at the proper season, the rivers to run in their channels, and to make the earth bear all things necessary for his people.

I dissent from this common practice, and have the more distrust of a man's capacity when I see it accompanied with a great fortune, and the public applause. We ought to consider of how great advantage it is for a man to speak when he

Montaigne apt to suspect a man's ability from the moment that he is preferred to a great post.

\* Plutarch, in his treatise of Hearing, chap. 7. of Amyot's translation.  
† Diog. Laert. in the life of Antisthenes, lib. vi. § 8. where this is told in a manner somewhat different, but in the main it amounts to the same thing.



pleases, to chuse his subject, to break off the argument, or change it with a magisterial authority, to defend himself against those who argue with him by a nod of the head, a smile, or by silence, in the presence of an assembly trembling with reverence and respect. A man of a monstrous fortune, offering to give his judgment in a slight dispute that was foolishly set on foot at his table, began in these very words, "he who says otherwise than so or so, must be a liar, or an ignoramus." Pursue this philosophical point sword-in-hand.

Important advice for forming a right judgment of a man's capacity in conversation.

There is another observation I have made, that has been of great service to me, which is, that in disputes and conferences, all the phrases which we think good, are not immediately to be accepted. Most men are rich in borrowed stock. One man may happen to say a good thing, to give an excellent answer, and advance a notable sentence without knowing the force of it. That a man is not master of all that he borrows may be, perhaps, verified in myself. It is not always necessary to yield presently to what is advanced, whatever truth or beauty it has. Either a man must heartily oppose it, or draw back, on pretence of not understanding it, to try in all parts how it is lodged in its author. It may happen that we may embarrass ourselves, and help to push the argument too far. I have sometimes, in the necessity and heat of combat, made pushes that have gone through and through, beyond my design and expectation. I only gave them in number, but they were received by weight: in like manner, when I contend with a brisk disputant, I please myself with anticipating his conclusions; I ease him of the trouble of explaining himself, I endeavour to prevent his imagination whilst it is yet springing up and imperfect; the order and pertinency of his understanding warns and threatens me at a good distance. With these I take a course quite contrary. I must understand and suppose nothing but by them. If they give judgment in general terms, "this is good, this is bad," and that they happen to be in the right, see if it be not fortune that hits it off for them. Let them circumscribe, and limit their



their judgment a little, why, or how is it ſo. Theſe univerſal judgments, which I ſee ſo common, ſignify nothing. Theſe are men who ſalute a whole people in a crowd together. Such as have a perfect knowledge of them take notice of, and ſalute them particularly, and by name; but it is a hazardous attempt. From hence I have frequently ſeen it fall out that ſhallow wits, affecting to appear ingenious in taking notice of the beautiful paſſages in a work which they are reading, fix their admiration with ſo ill a choice, that, inſtead of diſcovering the author's excellence to us, they only expoſe their own ignorance. It is a falſe exclamation to ſay, "this is fine," after having heard a whole page of Virgil. By this means the cunning ones ſave their credit. But to undertake to follow him by a paſſage here and there, and, with a poſitive and approved judgment, to attempt the obſerving where a good author ſurpaſſes himſelf, weighing the terms, phraſes, inventions, and various excellencies, one after another, by all means forbear it. *Videndum eſt non modo, quid quiſque loquatur, ſed etiam, quid quiſque ſentiat, atque etiam, quâ de cauſâ quiſque ſentiat* ‡; "we are not only to obſerve what every one ſays, but alſo what he thinks, and for what reaſon he thinks ſo." I every day hear fools ſay things that are not ſilly. If they ſay a good thing, let us examine where they had it. We help them to make uſe of this fine expreſſion, and of that fine argument; which is not their own, and which they only have in keeping; they bolt them out at a venture, and by gueſs; we make them turn out to their credit and eſteem. You lend them a hand, but to what purpoſe? They do not think themſelves obliged to you for it, and become ſtill the greater blockheads. Never ſecond them; let them go on in their own way; they will handle the ſubject like people afraid to burn their own fingers. They neither dare to change its ſituation nor light, nor to dive into it. Shake it ever ſo little, it ſlips through their fingers; and, be their cauſe ever ſo good and ſtrong, they give it up to you. Theſe are fine weapons, but have not good haſts.

‡ Cic. de Offic. lib. i. cap. 41.



How many times have I seen the proof of them. Now, if you go to explain things to them, and confirm them, they catch at it, and immediately steal the advantage of your interpretation, by saying, "that was what I was going to say; that was just my thought, and if I did not express it so clearly it was for want of language." This is mere gasconade. There had need be malice itself employed to correct this haughty stupidity. Hegesias's doctrine, that we are neither to hate nor accuse, but to instruct, is right elsewhere; but here it is injustice, and inhumanity, to relieve and set him right, who cares not for it, and is the worse for it. I love to let them sink deeper, and intangle themselves more and more in the mire, till at last, if it be possible, they may own their mistake. Folly and nonsense are not to be cured by admonition, of which we may properly say, as Cyrus did to the person who importuned him to make an harangue to his army just before a battle, viz. that men are not immediately rendered valiant and warlike, by a fine oration, no more than a man suddenly becomes a musician by hearing a fine song. These are apprenticeships that are to be served before-hand by a long and constant discipline. We owe this care, and this assiduity of correction and instruction, to our own people; but to go and preach to the first person that passes by, and to lord it over the ignorance and folly of the first we meet, is a custom that I heartily abhor. I rarely do it, even in private discourse, and sooner give up my cause than proceed to such retrograde and magisterial instructions. My temper is unfit either to speak or write for petty princes. But in things which are said in common, or amongst others, however false and absurd I think them, I never oppose them either by word or sign.

The most disagreeable thing in a fool is his admiration of every thing that he says.

As to the rest, nothing puts me so much out of conceit with a fool, as that he pleases himself more than any man of sense can reasonably please himself. It is a misfortune that prudence forbids us self-contentment and confidence, and sends us always away discontented and diffident in cases, where obstinacy and



and raſineſs fill thoſe that are guilty of them with joy and aſſurance. The ignorant are they who look back at other men over the ſhoulder, always returning from the combat full of joy and triumph. And this haughtineſs of ſtyle, and gaiety of countenance, often gives them the advantage, in the opinion of by-ſtanders, who are commonly weak and incapable of rightly judging and diſcerning the real advantages. Obſtinacy and vehemence in opinion is the ſureſt proof of ſtupidity. Is there any thing ſo poſitive, reſolute, ſcornful, contemptive, ſerious, and grave as an aſs?

May we not incorporate in diſcourſe and converſation the ſharp and pointed expreſſions which mirth and familiarity introduce among friends, pleaſantly and briskly jeſting with, and bantering one another? This is an exerciſe for which my natural gaiety fits me well enough; and, though it be not as tedious and ſerious, as that other exerciſe which I mentioned juſt now, it is every whit as acute and ingenious, and, as Lycurgus thought, altogether as uſeful. For my part, I contribute more freedom than wit to it, and am more obliged to luck than to invention; but I am perfect in ſuffering, for I can bear a retaliation that is not only tart but indiſcreet alſo, without being at all moved. And whenever I am attacked, if I have not a brisk repartee ready, I do not trouble myſelf by purſuing the ſubject with a nauſeous impertinent conteſt, bordering upon obſtinacy. I let it drop; am glad to give up the point, and wait a better opportunity to take ſatisfaction. No merchant is always a gainer. Moſt men, when their ſtrength fails them, change their countenance and voice; and, by an unſeaſonable indignation, inſtead of revenging themſelves, accuſe at once their own folly and impatience. In theſe jovial moments we ſometimes pinch the private ſtrings of our imperfections, which, when compoſed, we cannot touch without offence; and we hint our defects to one another to our advantage.

The uſefulneſs of ſmart and bold repartees in converſation.

There are other rough and indiſcreet contentions, after the French manner, which I mortally hate. I have a tender



der skin, which is sensible of the least touch. I have, in my time, known two princes of our royal blood interred, who lost their lives by such a dispute. It is unhand-some, at play, to fall out and fight.

When I have a mind to judge of any one, I ask him how he likes himself, to what degree his speech, or his work pleases him. I bar those fine apologies: "I did it only for my pastime; I was not an hour about it; I have not looked over it since."

*Ablatum mediis opus est incudibus istis\*.*

This work, unfinished, from the anvil came.

What method  
Montaigne took  
to form a judg-  
ment of a com-  
position, when  
the author sub-  
mitted to it.

Well but, say I, set those pieces aside, and give one that represents you entire, such a one as you would be measured by. And then what do you think is the best part of your performance? Is it this part, or that? the grace, or the subject, the invention, the judgment, or the learning? For I commonly find, that men are as wide of the mark in judging of their own works, as those of others; not only by reason of the fondness they have for them, but for want of ability to know and distinguish them. The work, by its own merit and fortune, may second the workman, and outstrip him beyond his invention and knowledge. For my part, I do not judge of the value of other men's works more obscurely than of my own; and the rise and fall of my Essays, in my estimation, is very wavering and inconstant. There are many books that are useful upon account of their subjects, from which the author derives no praise; and there are good books, as well as good works, which are a disgrace to the operator. I may write of the manner of our feasts, of the fashion of our cloaths, and may treat of them with an ill grace. I may publish the edicts of my time, and the letters of princes that are handed about. I may make an abridgment of a

\* Ovid, Trist. lib. i. eleg. 6. ver. 29.



good book (though all abridgments of \* good books are silly) which book may come to be lost, and the like. Posterity may receive singular benefit from such compositions; but what honour shall I get, unless it be by mere good luck? A great part of the authors of note are in this condition. Several years ago, when I read Philip de Comines, who is, doubtless, a very good author, I took notice of this, as an uncommon maxim, “that a man  
“ should be cautious of doing his master so much service  
“ as to hinder him from meeting with a just requital.” I ought to commend the invention, not him; for I not long ago met with it in Tacitus, who says, “that benefits give us pleasure, while they are not too great to be  
“ requited; but, when they far exceed that, hatred is re-  
“ turned instead of thanks †.” And Seneca does not scruple to say, *Nam qui non putat esse turpe non reddere, non vult esse cui reddat ‡*; “he who thinks it a shame not  
“ to make a requital, wishes the man, to whom he owes  
“ it, was not in being.” Quintus Cicero says, a little more feintly, *Qui se non putat satis facere, amicus esse nulla modo potest ||*; “he who thinks it not in his power to make  
“ you satisfaction, can by no means be your friend.” The subject, according to what it is, may procure the writer a reputation for learning, and a good memory; but to inspect him, and see what talents are most his own, and most worthy, and the vigour and beauty of his genius, it is necessary to know what is his own, and what is not so; and, in that which is not his own, to consider how much we are obliged to him for the choice, disposition, ornament, and language, which he has furnished. What if he has borrowed the matter, and spoiled the form, as often happens? We, who have little acquaintance with books, are in this difficulty, that, when we meet with some beautiful invention in any modern poet, any powerful argument in a preacher, we dare not, however, com-

\* Somebody, however, has thought fit to publish a kind of abridgment of Montaigne's Essays (called *L'Esprit des Essais*, &c.) but, as if the abridgment had been made only to justify Montaigne's observation, it died as it were in its birth, and is not like to be ever reprinted.

† Tacit. Annal. lib. iv. cap. 18.

‡ Seneca, ep. 81.

|| Q. Cicer. de Petitione Consulatus, cap. 9.



mend them for it, till we have first informed ourselves by some learned man whether the same be their own, or borrowed. Till then I am always on my guard.

A digression  
concerning the  
genius, and cha-  
racter of Tacitus.

I have very lately read the history of Tacitus, from the beginning to the end (which is the more remarkable in me, as it is twenty years ago since I stuck to any one book an hour together), and I did it at the persuasion of a gentleman whom France holds in very great esteem, not only for his own worth, but for a constant appearance of capacity and virtue, which is discovered in many of his brothers. I do not know any author that, in a public narrative, has interwoven such remarks on manners, and particular inclinations; and I am of a quite contrary opinion to him, which is that being, especially, to write the lives of the emperors of his time, so various and extraordinary in every shape; and, to relate so many notable actions, as their cruelty particularly produced in their subjects, he had more important, and more engaging matter to discourse of, and to relate, than if he had been to describe battles, and universal commotions; insomuch, that I often find him insipid when he runs over the deaths of those brave men, as if he feared we should think them too numerous and tedious. This kind of historiography is by much the most useful. Public commotions depend most upon the conduct of fortune; private ones upon our own. This work of Tacitus is rather a judgment given upon facts, than a deduction of history. There are more lessons than stories in it: it is not a book to read, but to study and learn; it is full of opinions, some right, others wrong: it is a nursery of ethics and politics, for the use and ornament of such as have any share in the government of the world. He always uses solid and vigorous arguments in a sharp, subtle manner, according to the affected style of that age: and was so fond of the sublime that, where sharpness and subtlety were wanting, in the matter, he supplied the defect with lofty swelling words. His way of writing is much like that of Seneca. His style seems to me to be the more nervous, Seneca's more



more sharp. But Tacitus's history is the most proper for a troubled, sickly state, as ours is at present; and you would often say, that he both paints and pinches us.

They who doubt of his integrity, plainly enough confess they do not like him in other respects. His opinions are solid, and lean for the most part, towards the Roman affairs. Nevertheless, I am a little out of temper with him for judging more severely of Pompey, than suited with the opinion of those worthy men that lived in the same time, and treated with him; and for thinking Pompey, in all respects, like Marius and Sylla, excepting that he was more close\*. His intention, in the management of affairs, has not been exempted from ambition, nor revenge; and his very friends were afraid that his victory would have transported him beyond the bounds of reason; but not a degree so much beyond all restraint. There is nothing in Pompey's life that carries the marks of such express cruelty and tyranny. Neither ought we to compare suspicion to evidence; consequently I do not believe Tacitus in this matter. Supposing his narratives to be genuine and right, it might, perhaps, be argued, even from hence, that they are not always exactly applied to the conclusions of his judgments, which he always follows, according to the bias he has taken, often beyond the subject he opens to us, to which he has not deigned to give the least regard. He needs no excuse for having approved of the religion of his time, as it was enjoined by the laws, and for having been ignorant of the true religion. This was his misfortune, not his fault.

Tacitus, though a sincere historian, and zealous for the public good, has censured Pompey too severely.

I have principally considered his judgment, and do not fully understand it every where; and these words, particularly in a letter which Tiberius, when old and sick, sent to the senate, “† What shall I write to you, sirs, or how shall I write to you, or what shall I not write to you at this juncture? May the gods and goddesses lay a worse punishment upon

Whether he formed a right judgment of a paragraph in a letter from Tiberius to the senate.

\* Tacit. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 38.

† Tacit. Annal. lib. vi. cap. 6.



"me, than what I feel every day, if I know." I do not see why he should so positively apply them to a stinging remorse of Tiberius's conscience. At least, when I was in the same case, I perceived no such thing.

Blamed by Montaigne for making an apology for having spoke of himself in his history.

This is also deemed to me a little mean in Tacitus, that, being to say he had exercised a certain & honourable office of the magistracy, he excused himself by saying that he did not mention it by way of ostentation. This seems a little too low an expression for such a genius as his was; since for a man not to do himself justice, implies some want of courage; one of a rough and lofty judgment, which is also safe and sound, makes use of his own example upon all occasions, as well as those of others; and gives evidence as freely of himself as of a third person. We are to supersede these common rules of civility in favour of truth and liberty. I presume not only to speak of myself, but of myself alone. When I write of any thing else, I mistake my way, and lose my subject: yet I am not so indiscreetly enamoured with, or so bigotted to, and inwrapped up in myself, that I cannot distinguish, and consider myself apart, as I do a neighbour, or a tree. It is equally a failing for a man not to discern all his ability, or to say more than he sees in himself. We owe more love to God than to ourselves, and know him less; yet we speak of him as much as we please.

The character of Tacitus to be judged of by his writings.

If the writings of Tacitus make any discovery of his qualities, he was a great man, upright and bold; not of a superstitious, but of a philosophical, and generous virtue.

Tacitus, and all historians are to be commended for relating extraordinary facts and popular rumours.

A man may think him bold in his stories; as where he says that a soldier carrying a bundle of wood, his hands were so frozen, and stuck so fast to it, that they were severed by it from his arms. I always, in such things, submit to such great authorities †. What he says also of Vespasian ‡, that by

§ "Domitianus edidit ludos seculares, iisque intentius affui, sacerdotio Quindecimvirali præditus, actum Prætor, quod non jactantia refero," &c. Tacit. Annal. lib. xi. cap. 11.

† Tacit. Annal. xiii. cap. 35.

‡ Hist. lib. iv. cap. 81.



the favour of the god Serapis, he cured a blind woman in Alexandria, by anointing her eyes with his ſpittle, and I know not what other miracles; he does it by the example and duty of all good hiſtorians, who keep regiſters of ſuch events as are of importance. Among public accidents are alſo common rumours and opinions. It is their part to relate the things commonly believed, not to regulate them. This is the province of the divines and the philoſophers, who are the guides of men's conſciences. Therefore it was that this companion of his, and as great a man as himſelf, very wiſely ſaid, *Equidem plura tranſcribo quàm credo: nam nec affirmare ſuſtineo, de quibus dubito, nec ſubducere quæ accepi* \*, “ indeed I ſet down more things than I believe; for as I cannot endure to affirm things whereof I doubt, ſo I cannot ſmother what I have heard.” And this other; *Hæc neque affirmare neque refellere operæ pretium eſt—fama rerum ſtandum eſt* †, “ it is not worth while to affirm, or to confute theſe matters.” We muſt ſtand to report: and as he wrote in an age when the belief of prodigies began to decline, he ſays, he would not, nevertheleſs, omit to inſert in his annals, and to give a place to things received by ſo many worthy men, and with ſo great a reverence of antiquity. This was well ſaid. Let them deliver us hiſtory more as they receive, than believe it. I, who am a monarch of the ſubject I treat of, and who am accountable to nobody, do not, however, believe every thing I write. I often hazard the fallies of my fancy, of which I am very diffident, as well as certain quibbles, at which I ſhake my ears; but I let them take their chance. I ſee that by ſuch things ſome get reputation: it is not for me alone to judge. I preſent myſelf ſtanding, and lying on my face, my back, my right ſide and my left, and in all my natural poſtures. Wits, though equal in force, are not always equal in taſte and application. This is what my memory has furniſhed me with in groſs, and with uncertainty enough. All judgments in the groſs are weak and imperfect.

\* Q. Curtius, lib. ix. chap. 1. tranſlated by Vangelas.

† Tit. Liv. lib. i. in the preface, and lib. viii. cap. 6.



## C H A P. IX.

*Of Vanity.*

Montaigne's  
pleasant apology  
for his under-  
taking this re-  
gister of his own  
humours.

**T**H E R E is not perhaps any vanity more exprefs, than to write of it so vainly. That which the Divinity has so divinely delivered of it to us, ought to be carefully and continually meditated by men of understanding. Who fees not that I have taken a road, in which I shall incessantly and easily jog on, so long as I can come at ink and paper? I can give no account of my life by my actions; fortune has placed them too low: I must do it by my fancies. And yet I have seen a gentleman who only communicated his life by the workings of his belly: you might see in his house a regular range of closestool-pans of seven or eight days standing: that was all his study, all his discourse; all other talk stunk in his nostrils. These here, but a little more decent, are the excrements of an old mind, sometimes hard, sometimes loose, and always indigested; and when shall I have done representing the continual agitation and mutation of my thoughts, on whatever subject comes into my head, seeing that Diomedes\* wrote six thousand books upon the sole subject of Grammar? What then must be the product of loquacity, if the world was stuffed with such a horrible load of volumes to facilitate pronunciation and free utterance? So many words about words only. O Pythagoras, why did'st not thou lay this tempest! They

\* Here Montaigne seems to have relied simply upon his memory, and to have mistaken Diomedes for Dydimus the grammarian, who, as Seneca says, wrote four thousand books on questions of vain literature, which was the principal study of the ancient grammarians. In some of these books was an enquiry into Homer's native country; in others, who was the true mother of Æneas; in some, whether Anacreon was the greater whore-master, or drunkard; in others, whether Sappho was a common strumpet; and the like things, which were better unlearnt, if you knew them. Seneca, epist. 88.



accused one Galba of old for living idly; he made answer, "that every one ought to give account of his actions, but not of his leisure \*." He was mistaken, for justice takes cognizance of, and passes censure even upon those that pick straws.

But there should be some restraint of law against foolish and impertinent scribblers, as well as against vagabonds and idle persons; which, if there was, both I and an hundred others would be banished the kingdom. I do not speak this in jest: scribbling seems to be a symptom of a licentious age. When did we write so much as since our civil wars? When the Romans so much, as when their commonwealth was running to ruin? Besides that the refining of wits does not make people wiser in state policy. This idle employment springs from hence, that every one applies himself negligently to the duty of his vocation, and is diverted from it. The corruption of the age is a fund to which each of us contribute. Some treachery, others injustice, irreligion, tyranny, avarice, and cruelty, according as they are in power; and the weaker sort, of which I am one, contribute folly, vanity, and idleness. It seems as if it were the season for vain things when the hurtful oppress us. In a time when doing ill is so common, to do nothing but what signifies nothing is a kind of commendation. It is my comfort, that I shall be one of the last that shall be called to account; and whilst the greater offenders are taken to task, I shall have leisure to amend; for, it would, methinks be against reason to prosecute little inconveniences, whilst we are infected with the greater. As the physician, Philotimus, said

Sorry scribblers  
ought to be sup-  
pressed by the  
laws, and  
why.

\* This was a saying of the emperor Galba, in his life by Suetonius, §. 9. It must be allowed here, either that Montaigne did not quote this from the original, or that his memory failed him; for, if he had meant the emperor Galba, he would not have called him, as he here does, one Galba of old. This is so palpable, that in the edition of his Essays, printed at Paris in 1602, by Abel l'Angelier, in that part of the index referring to this passage, care is taken to point out expressly, that the Galba here mentioned is to be distinguished from the emperor of this name.



to one who presented him his finger to dress, and who he perceived, both by his complexion and his breath, had an ulcer in his lungs: "Friend," said he, "this is not a time for you to be paring your nails \*."

How statesmen  
amuse the peo-  
ple while they  
most abuse  
them.

And yet I saw, some years ago, a person whose memory I have in very great esteem, who in the very height of our great disorders, when there was neither law nor justice, nor magistrate that performed his office, any more than there is now, published I know not what pitiful reformations about cloaths, cookery, and chicanery in law. These are amusements wherewith to feed a people that are ill used, to shew that they are not totally forgot. Those others do the same, who insist upon a strict prohibition of the forms of speaking, dances and games, to a people totally abandoned to all sort of execrable vices. It is no time to bathe and clean a man's self when he is seized with a violent fever. It is for the Spartiates only to fall to combing and curling themselves, when they are just upon the point of running head-long into some extreme danger of their life.

Montaigne  
wiser and more  
moderate in  
prosperity than  
adversity.

For my part, I have yet a worse custom, that if my shoe go awry, I let my shirt and my cloak do so too; I scorn to mend myself by halves: when I am in a bad plight, I feed upon mischief; I abandon myself through despair; let myself go towards the precipice, and as the saying is, "throw the helve after the hatchet." I am obstinate in growing worse, and think myself no more worth my own care; I am either good or ill throughout. It is a favour to me, that the desolation of this kingdom falls out in the desolation of my age: I am less concerned that my ills be multiplied than that my goods be disturbed. The words I utter in misfortune, are words of spite. My courage sets up its bristles instead of letting them down; and, contrary to others, I am more devout in good than evil fortune,

\* Plutarch in his treatise How to distinguish the flatterer from the friend, chap. 31.



according to the precept of Xenophon, if not according to his reason, and am more ready to turn up my eyes to heaven to return my thanks, than to crave; I am more solicitous to improve my health when I am well, than to recover it when I have lost it. Prosperities are the same discipline and instruction to me, that adversities and persecutions are to others: as if good fortune were inconsistent with a good conscience, men never grow good, but in ill fortune. Good fortune is to me a singular spur to modesty and moderation. Intreaty wins me, a menace checks me, favour makes me bend, fear stiffens me.

Amongst human conditions this is very common, viz. to be better pleased with strange things than our own, and to love motion and change. Change pleasing to men.

*Ipsa dies idem nos grato perluit baustu,  
Quod permutatis hora recurrit aquis\*.*

The sun itself makes the more pleasant tour,  
Because it changes horses every hour.

I have my share. Those who follow the other extreme by being pleased with themselves; who value what they have above all the rest, and conclude no beauty can be greater than what they see, if they are not wiser than we, are really more happy. I do not envy their wisdom, but their good fortune. This greedy appetite for new and unknown things makes me the more desirous of travel; but many more circumstances contribute to it. I am very willing to withdraw from the government of my family. There is, I confess, a kind of convenience in commanding, though it were but in a barn, and to be obeyed by one's servants: but it is too uniform and languishing a pleasure, and is moreover of necessity mixt with many vexatious thoughts; as one while the poverty and the oppression of your dependants; another, quar-

\* Petronius Arbiter. Epig.



rels amongst neighbours: another while the incroachment they make upon you afflicts you;

*Aut verberatæ grandine vineæ,  
Fundusque mendax, arbore nunc aquas  
Cu'pante, nunc torrentia argros  
Sydera, nunc hyemes iniquas* \*.

Whether his vines be smit with hail,  
Whether his promis'd harvest fail,  
Perfidious to his toil;  
Whether his drooping trees complain  
Of angry winter's chilling rain,  
Or stars that parch the soil.

and that God scarce in six months sends a season to the satisfaction of your bailiff; but that if it serves the vines it hurts the meadows.

*Aut nimis torret fervoribus ætherius sol,  
Aut subiti perimunt imbres, gelidæque pruinae,  
Flabráque ventorum violento turbine vexant* †.

Whether the sun, with its too scorching pow'rs,  
Bruns up the fruits, or clouds them drown with  
show'rs;  
Or chill'd by too much snow, they soon decay;  
Or sudden whirlwinds blow them all away.

To which may be added, the new and neat-made shoe of the man of old ‡, that hurts your foot; and that a stranger does not understand how much it costs you, and what you contribute to maintain that shew of order which is seen in your family, and which perhaps you buy too dear.

\* Horat. lib. iii. ode 1. ver. 25. &c.  
ver. 216, &c.

† Lucret. lib. v.

‡ Plutarch's life of Paulus Æmilius, chap. 3.



I came late to the government of a family. They whom nature sent into the world before me, eased me of that trouble for a long while : so that I had already taken another turn more suitable to my humour ; yet for so much as I have seen, it is an employment more troublesome than difficult. Whoever is capable of any thing else, will easily be capable of that. Had I a mind to be rich, that way would seem too long ; I had served my kings, a more profitable traffick than any other. Since I pretend to nothing but the reputation of having got nothing, as I have squandered nothing, conformable to the rest of my life, improper either to do good or ill of any moment ; and that I only desire to rub on, I can do it thanks be to God, without any great attention. At the worst, always prevent poverty by lessening your expence : it is that which I make my great concern, and to live within bounds before necessity compels me. As to the rest, I have sufficiently settled my thoughts to live upon less than I have, and to live contentedly. *Non æstimatione census, verum visu, atque cultu, terminatur pecuniæ modus* \*. “ It is not by the value of our possessions, but by our diet and clothing that our expences should be regulated.” My real need does not so wholly take up all I have, but misfortune may fasten her teeth without biting me to the quick. My presence, as contemptible as it is, and as little as I know of matters, is of service in my domestic affairs ; I employ myself in them, but it goes against the grain, considering also, that while I burn my candle at one end by myself, the other end is not spared.

The government of a family more troublesome than hard, and little understood by our author.

\* Cicer. Paradox. vi. cap. 2. Mere common sense demonstrates this to the lowest class of people, who when they see a purse-proud creature, ridicule him by saying : “ if he is so rich, let him dine twice a day.” This, though a common sarcasm (in France) contains a wise hint, very little known to most great men, who for want of it are engaged in employing one half of their lives to render the other wretched.



The expence of travelling did not keep him from it.

Journeys do me no harm but only by their expence, which is great, and more than I am well able to bear; being always wont to travel with not only a necessary, but a handsome equipage. I must make them so much the shorter and the fewer, and therein I spend but the surplus, and what I have reserved for such purpose, delaying and timing my motion till that be ready. I desire not that the pleasure of going abroad should spoil the pleasure of my being retired at home. On the contrary, I intend they shall nourish and favour one another. Fortune has assisted me in this, that since my principal profession in this life, was to live at ease, and rather to have nothing to do than too much, she has spared me the necessity of growing rich, to provide for a multitude of heirs. If there be not enough for one, of that whereof I had so much plenty, at his peril be it; his imprudence will not deserve that I should wish him any more. Every one, according to the example of Phocion, provides sufficiently for his children, who provides for them so as they bear a resemblance to himself. I should by no means like of Crates's way. He left his money in the hand of a banker, with this condition; that if his children were fools, he should then give it to them; if witty, he should then distribute it to the foolish among the people. As if fools, for being less capable of living without riches, were more capable of using them. So it is that the damage which is occasioned by my absence, seems not to deserve, so long as I am able to support it, that I should wave the occasions of diverting myself from that troublesome attendance.

Domestic affairs are always teasing.

There is always something that goes cross. The affairs one while of one house, and then of another, almost distract you. You pry into every thing too near; your perspicacity hurts you here as well as in other things. I steal away from occasions of vexing myself, and turn from the knowledge of things that go amiss, and yet cannot I so order it, but that every hour I stumble at something or other that displeases me. And the tricks which



which they most conceal from me, are those that I best know. Some there are that a man himself must help to conceal, that they may do the less mischief. Vain vexations, vain sometimes, but always vexatious. The smallest and slightest impediments are the most piercing: and as small letters most tire the eyes, so do little affairs the most disturb us. "A route of little ills more offend than the violence of any single one, how great soever. Domestic thorns, the more numerous and delicate they are, they prick the deeper; and without warning, easily surprise us, when we least suspect them. I am no philosopher. Evils oppress me according to their importance, and they import as much according to the form as the matter; and very often more. I see farther into them than the vulgar, yet I have more patience. Finally, they vex me, if they do not hurt me. Life is a tender thing, and easily disturbed. Since my face looks a little more morose, (*nemo enim resistit sibi cum ceperit impelli* \* : "for no man recovers himself, after he once begins to "stoop;)" for the most trivial cause imaginable, I irritate that humour, which afterwards nourishes and exasperates itself of its own accord; attracting and heaping up matter upon matter whereon to feed,

*Stillicidi casus lapidem cavat †.*

A falling drop at last will cave a stone.

*Gutta cavat saxum non vi, sed sæpe cadendo:*

These continual trickling drops corrode and prey upon me. Ordinary inconveniences are never light, they are continual and irreparable; and when they spring from family-concerns are continual and inseparable. When I consider my affairs at a distance, and in gross, I find, perhaps, because my memory is none of the best, that

\* Seneca, epist. 13.

† Lucret. lib. i. ver. 314.



they have improved hitherto beyond my reason and reckoning. Methinks my revenue is greater than it is; the prosperity betrays me: but when I pry more narrowly into the business, and see how all things go separately,

*Tum vero in curas animum diducimus omnes* \*.

— — — then my breast  
Is with innumerable cares oppress'd.

I have a thousand things to desire and to fear. To give them quite over is very easy for me to do: but to look after them without trouble is very hard. It is a miserable thing to be in a place where every thing you see employs and concerns you. And I fancy that I more cheerfully enjoy the pleasures of another man's house, and with freer and purer relish. Diogenes †, according to my humour, answered him who asked what sort of wine he liked best, "that which is not my own."

Montaigne had  
no taste for  
building, or  
other pleasures  
of a retired life.

My father took a delight in building at Montaigne, where he was born, and in all the management of domestic affairs, I love to follow his examples and rules; and shall engage those who are to succeed me, as much as in me lies, to do the same. Could I do better for him, I would; and am proud that his will is still performing and acting by me. God forbid, that I should ever fail in any resemblance of life to so good a father. As I have taken in hand to finish a certain old wall, and to repair a ruinous piece of building, I have really done it more out of respect to his design, than to my own satisfaction; and am angry at myself, for being so lazy that I have not proceeded further to finish what he began in his house; and the more, because I am very likely to be the last possessor of my race, and to give the last hand to it. For, as to my own par-

\* Virg. *Æn.* lib. v. ver. 720.

† Diog. Laert. in the life of Diogenes the Cynic. lib. vi. § 54.



particular application, neither this pleasure of building, which they say is so bewitching, nor hunting, nor gardens, nor the other pleasures of a retired life, are capable of giving me much amusement. And it is what I am angry at myself for, as I am for all other opinions that are incommodious to me ; which I would not so much care to have vigorous and learned, as I would have them easy and convenient for life. They are true and sound enough, if they are profitable and pleasing. Such as hearing me declare my ignorance in husbandry, whisper in my ear, that it is out of disdain, that I neglect to know the instruments of husbandry, its season and order ; how they cultivate my vines, how they graft, and to know the names and forms of herbs and fruit, and the dressing the meat by which I live, with the names and prices of the stuffs I wear, because I have set my heart upon some sublimer knowledge, hurt me in saying so. This is folly, and rather stupidity than glory ; I had rather be a good horseman than a good logician.

*Quin tu aliquid saltem potius quorum indiget usus,  
Viminibus mollique paras detexere junco \* ?*

Mind rather what the wants of life demand ;  
To weaving willow twigs apply thy hand.

We embarrass our thoughts about the general concern, and about universal causes and effects, which are very well carried on without us, and leave our own business behind, with the care of our own persons, which are nearer to us, than that of any man whatever. Now I am indeed for the most part at home, and wish to be better pleased there than elsewhere.

*Sit meæ sedes utinam seneſcæ,  
Sit modus laſſo maris, & viarum,  
Militiæque †.*

• Virg. Eclog. ii. ver. 71.

† Horat. lib. ii. ode 6. ver. 6.



May that which was the Græcians feat  
 Afford my age a calm retreat;  
 Be it my port of rest and ease,  
 From warfare, journeys, and rough seas.

I know not whether or no I shall bring it about; I could wish, that instead of some other parcel of his estate, my father had consigned to me the passionate affection he had in his old age to his œconomy. He was happy in that he could accommodate his desires to his fortune, and satisfy himself with what he had. State-philosophy may to much purpose condemn the meanness and sterility of my employment, if I can once come to relish it as he did. I am of opinion, that the most honourable calling is to serve the public, and to be useful to many. *Fructus enim ingenii, & virtutis, omnisque præstantiæ tum maximus accipitur, quum in proximum quemque confertur*\*; “we reap  
 “most advantage from wit, virtue, and all sorts of merit,  
 “when every one of our nearest relations has a share of  
 “it.” For my part, I quit all claim to it; partly out of laziness, and partly out of conscience; for where I see the weight that lies upon such employments, I perceive also the little means I have to contribute to them; and Plato, who was a master in all political government, nevertheless abstained from them. I content myself with enjoying the world without being perplexed with it, and only to live an irreproachable life, and such a one as may neither be a burden to myself, nor to any other.

His wish that he  
 could abandon  
 himself to the  
 government of  
 some trusty  
 friend.

Never did any man more full and freely resign himself to the care and government of a third person, than I would do, had I any one to trust in. One of my wishes at this time would be, to have a son-in-law that knew how to humour my old age, and to lull it asleep; into whose hands I might deposite the chief and sole management and use of all my goods, that he might dispose of them as I do, and get by them what I get, provided that he had a heart truly grateful

\* Cicero de Amicitia, cap. 19.



and friendly. But, what shall we say? we live in a world where loyalty in one's own children is unknown.

He that has the charge of my purse upon travel, has it purely, and without controul; so that he might easily deceive me in reckoning; and, if he is not a devil, I oblige him to be honest, by so entire a trust: *multi fallere docuerunt, dum timent falli, & aliis jus peccandi suspirando fecerunt* †. “Many have taught others to deceive, “by feating to be deceived; and by suspecting them, “have given them a handle to be unjust.” The most common security I take of my people, is their ignorance: I never suspect any to be vicious, till I have found them so, and repose the most confidence in the younger sort, who I think are least corrupted by bad examples. I had rather be told at two months end, that I have expended four hundred crowns, than to have my ears din-  
ned every night with three, five, and seven; and yet I have suffered as little as any body by this kind of larceny. It is true, I am willing enough not to know it; I do in some sort in good earnest, harbour a kind of perplexed, uncertain knowledge of my money; for to a certain proportion, I am content with room to doubt. One must leave a little for the infidelity or indiscretion of a servant: if we have enough in gross to do our business, let the overplus of fortune's liberality run a little more freely at her mercy; it is the gleaners perquisite. After all, I do not so much value the fidelity of my people, as I contemn their injury. What a vile and ridiculous thing it is for a man to set his heart on his money, to delight himself with handling and telling it! That is the way by which avarice makes its approaches.

He loved to repose a confidence in his domestics.

In eighteen years that I have had my estate in my own hands, I could never prevail with myself, either to inspect my deeds, or my principal affairs, which ought of necessity to pass through my knowledge and care. It is not a philosophical disdain of

He avoided an inspection into his own affairs by mere negligence.

† Seneca, epist. 3.



worldly and transitory things. My taste is not refined to that degree ; and I value them at least at what they are worth ; but it is in truth an inexcusable and childish laziness and negligence. What would I not rather do than read a covenant, and sooner than be a slave to my own business, and to tumble over a bundle of old musty deeds ? or, which is worse, those of another man, as so many do now a-days to get money ? I grudge nothing but care and trouble, and aim at nothing so much as to be quite careless and indolent. I was much fitter, I believe, could it have been without obligation and servitude, to have lived upon another man's fortune : yet I do not know, when I examine it nearer, whether, according to my humour, what I suffer from my affairs and servants, and domestics, has not in it something more abject, troublesome, and tormenting, than there would be in serving a man better born than myself, who would guide me with a gentle rein, and a little at my own ease. *Servitus obedientia est fracti animi, et abjecti, arbitrio carentis suo* \* ; “ servitude is the obedience of a broken spirit and an abject mind, wanting its own free-will.”

Poverty affected  
by Crates.

Crates did worse, who threw himself into the franchise of poverty, only to rid himself of the inconveniencies and cares of his family. This is what I would not do ; I hate poverty equally with pain ; but I could be content to change the kind of life I live for another that was meaner, and had less business. When absent from home, I strip myself of all such thoughts ; and would be less concerned for the ruin of a tower, than I am, when present, at the fall of a tile. My mind is easily composed when I am at a distance, but suffers as much as that of the meanest peasant at what happens in the place where I am. The reins of my bridle being wrong placed, or a strap flapping against my leg, will put me out of humour a day together. I raise my courage well enough against inconveniencies, lift up my eyes I cannot.

\* Cicero, paradox. v. cap. 4.



*Sensus, ô superi, sensus.*

The senses ! O ye gods, the senses !

I am at home responsible for whatever goes amiss. Few masters, I speak of those of middle rank, as mine is, (and if there be any such, they are happy) can rely so much upon another, but that great part of the burthen will lie upon their own shoulders. This takes much from my grace in entertaining strangers, so that I have perhaps detained some rather out of expectation of a good dinner, than by my behaviour ; and I lose much of the pleasure I ought to reap at my own house, from the visits and company of my friends. The most ridiculous carriage of a gentleman in his own house, is when he is bustling about the business of the family, whispering one servant, and frowning at another. It ought insensibly to slide on like a gentle stream ; and I think it equally unhandsome to talk much to their guests of their entertainment, whether by way of bragging or excuse. I love order and cleanliness,

*Et cantbarus, Et lanx  
Ostendunt mihi me\*.*

Glasses well rins'd, my table always grace,  
And dishes shine, in which I see my face.

more than profusion : and at home have an exact regard to necessity, little to outward shew. If a footman falls to cuffs at another man's house, or if a dish be spilt, you only laugh at it. You sleep whilst the master of the house is stating a bill of fare with his steward, for your next day's entertainment. I speak according as I do myself, esteeming nevertheless good husbandry in general, considering how pleasant an amusement a quiet and happy management, carried regularly on, is to some

\* Horat. lib. i. epist. 5. ver. 23, 24.



natures; and not willing to annex my own errors and inconveniencies to the thing, nor to contradict Plato, who looks upon it as the most pleasant employment for every one to do his own business, without wrong to another. When I travel, I have nothing to care for but myself, and the laying out of my money; which is disposed of by one single precept.

Montaigne not at all inclined to hoard money, but knew how to lay it out.

Too many things are required to the raking it together, of which I have no notion; in spending it I understand a little, and how to give my expences a reputation, which is indeed their principal use.

But I rely too vainly upon this, which renders it unequal and unfashionable, and moreover immoderate, in both views. If it makes a show, if it serve the turn, I indiscreetly let it run, and as indiscreetly tie up my purse-strings if it does not shine and please me. Whatever it be, whether art or nature, that imprints in us the condition of living to please others, it does us much more harm than good. We deprive ourselves of our own profit, to accommodate appearances to the common opinion. We care not so much what our being is, as to ourselves, and in reality, as what it is in the public observation. Even the talents of wit, and wisdom itself, seem fruitless to us, if only enjoyed by ourselves, and if it produce not itself to the view and approbation of others. There is a sort of men whose gold runs in clusters imperceptibly under-ground; others expend it all in plates and leaves, so that to the one a liard\* is worth a crown, and others the reverse: the world esteeming its use and value, according to the display of it. All curious solicitude about riches smells of avarice: even the very disposing of it with a too punctual and artificial liberality, is not worth a painful thought. He that will order his expence to just so much, makes it too pinched and narrow. The saving or spending money are of themselves indifferent things, and receive no co-

\* A piece of copper money worth three farthings.



hour of good or ill, but according to the application of the will.

The other cause that tempts me to these journeys, is a nonconformity to the present manners of our state; I could easily put up with this corruption for the sake of the public interest,

The depraved morals of his country, another motive of Montaigne's travelling.

*pejoraque sæcula ferri  
Temporibus, quorum sceleri non invenit ipsa  
Nomen, & à nullo posuit natura metallo \*.*

Worse than the iron age, so bad these times!  
Nature no metal hath to name our crimes.

but not for my own. I am in particular too much oppressed. For in my neighbourhood we are of late, by the long licentiousness of our civil wars, grown old in so riotous a form of state,

*Quippe, ubi fas versum atque nefas †.*

Where impious mortals right and wrong confound,  
that in earnest, it is a wonder how it can subsist.

*Armati terram exercent, semperque recentes  
Conveflare juvat prædas, & vivere rapto ‡.*

With arms upon their backs they plow the soil,  
And their delight is to subsist by spoil.

In fine, I see by our example, that the society of men is maintained and held together at any price: in what condition soever they are placed they will still close and stick together, both moving and in heaps; as uneven

\* Juven. sat. 13. ver. 28, &c.

† Virg. Æn. lib. vii. ver. 748.

‡ Geo. lib. i. ver. 504.



bodies, that shuffled together without order, find of themselves a means to unite and settle one among another, often better than they could have been disposed by art. King Philip mustered up a rabble of the most wicked and incorrigible rascals he could pick out, and put them all together into a city he had caused to be build for that purpose\*, which bore their name. I reckon that they even from the vices, erected a government amongst themselves, and a commodious and just society. I see not one action, either three, or an hundred, but manners, in common and received use, so cruel, especially in inhumanity and treachery, which are to me the worst of all vices, that I have not the heart to think of them without horror; and almost as much admire as I detest them.' The exercise of these notorious villanies carries as great signs of vigour and fortitude of mind, as of error and disorder. Necessity reconciles and brings men together; and this accidental union is afterwards cemented by itself into laws: for there have been as savage ones as any human opinion could conceive, which nevertheless have maintained their body with as much health and length of life as any that Plato or Aristotle could invent. And certainly, all these descriptions of civil government feigned by art, are found to be ridiculous, and unfit for practice.

The drift of all disputes about the best form of government.

These great and tedious debates about the best form of society, and the most commodious rules to bind us, are debates only proper for the exercise of our wits; as in the arts there are several subjects which have their being in agitation and controversy, and have no life but there. Such an idea of government might be of some value in a new world; but ours is a world ready made to our hands, and formed to certain customs. We do not beget it as Pyrrha, or Cadmus did theirs. By what means soever we may claim the privilege to set it to rights, and give it a new form, we can hardly twist it from its wonted bent, but we shall break

\* Πονηρόπολις, or Rogues-town. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 11.



all. Solon being asked, whether he had established the best laws he could for the Athenians; "yes," said he, "of those they could receive." Varro excuses himself after the same manner; that if they were to begin to write of religion, he would say what he believed; but it being already received, he would write more according to usance than nature. Not according to opinion, but in truth and reality; the best and most excellent government for every nation is that under which it is maintained. Its form and essential convenience depends upon custom. We are apt to be displeased at the present condition; but I nevertheless maintain, that to desire an oligarchy in a popular state, or another sort of government in monarchy than that already established, is both vice and folly.

*Ayme l'estat tel que tu le vois estre ;  
S'il est royal ayme la royauté,  
S'il est de peu, ou bien communauté,  
Ayme l'aussi, car dieu t'y a fait naistre \*.*

Approve the government, whate'er it be ;  
If regal, praise it in the first degree ;  
Or if 'tis formed on democratic sway,  
Thou owest still th' allegiance to obey.

So writ the good Monsieur de Pybrac, whom we have lately lost, a man of so excellent a wit, so sound opinions, and so sweet a behaviour. This loss, and that at the same time we have had of Monsieur de Foix, are of so great importance to the crown, that I do not know whether there is another couple left in France worthy to supply the room of these two Gascons for sincerity and wisdom; in our king's council. They were both great geniuses, and certainly, according to the age, rare and excellent, each of them in his way. But what destiny was it placed in these times, men so remote from, and so disproportioned to, our corruptions and intestine tumults?

• Pybrac aux quadrins.



Nothing is more dangerous to a state than a great change.

Nothing presses so hard upon a state as innovation: change only gives form to justice and tyranny. When any piece is out of its place, it may be propt; one may obviate the alteration and corruption natural to all things lest they carry us too far from our beginnings and principles: but to undertake to new-mould so great a mass, and to change the foundations of so vast a building, is for them to do, who to make clean, rub all out; who are for reforming particular defects by an universal confusion, and for curing diseases by death: *non tam commutandarum quam evertendarum rerum cupidus*\*; “not so desirous of changing, as of overthrowing things.” The world is incapable to cure itself; and so impatient of any thing that presses it, that it thinks of nothing but disengaging itself, cost what it will. We see by a thousand examples, that it ordinarily cures itself to its cost: the discharge of a present evil is no cure, if there be not a general amendment of condition. The surgeon’s end is not to deaden the bad flesh, which is but the beginning of his cure; his view is likewise to fill up the wound with natural flesh, and to restore the member to its due state. Whoever only proposes to himself to remove that which offends him, falls short, for good does not necessarily succeed evil; another evil may succeed, and a worse, as happened to Cæsar’s assassins, who brought the republic to such a pass, that they had reason to repent their having a hand in it. The same has since happened to several others, even down to our own times. The French, my contemporaries, know it well enough. All great changes shake and disorder a state.

Remarkable instance of the difficulty that attends the reformation of a state.

Whoever would aim directly at a cure, and consider of it before he began, would not be so earnest to attempt it. Pacuvius Calavius corrected the vice of this proceeding by a notable example. His fellow-citizens having mutinied against their magistrates, he being a man of great authority in the city of

\* Cicer. Offic. lib. ii. cap. i.



Capua, found means one day to shut up the senators in the palace, and calling the people together in the square, he told them, that the day was now come, wherein they were at full liberty to revenge themselves on the tyrants, by whom they had been so long oppressed; and whom he had now all alone, and disarmed at his mercy: advising also, that they would call them out severally by lot; and particularly determine of each; causing whatever should be decreed to be immediately executed\*; with this caution that they should at the same instant depute some honest man in the place of him that was condemned, to the end there might be no vacancy in the senate. They had no sooner heard the name of one senator, but a clamor of universal dislike was raised against him. I see, says Pacuvius, that this man must be put out; he is a wicked fellow, let us look out a good one in his room: immediately there was a profound silence, every one being at a stand whom to choose. But one, more impudent than the rest, having named his man, there arose yet a greater consent of voices against him, an hundred imperfections being laid to his charge, and as many just reasons presently given for rejecting him. These contradictory humours growing hot, it fared still worse with the second senator and the third, there being as much disagreement in the election of the new, as there was consent in the putting out of the old. In the end, growing weary of this bustle to no purpose, they began some one way, and some another, to steal out of the assembly; every one bearing this resolution in his mind, that the oldest and best known evil was ever more supportable, than one that was new and untried.

To see how miserably we are torn in pieces:

For what have we not done?

Governments  
stand their  
ground though  
very much  
shattered.

\* All this is mentioned in Titus Livius lib. xxiii. cap. 2, 3. and touched as I think, by a masterly hand.



*Eheu cicatricum, & sceleris pudet,  
 Fratrumque : quid nos dura refugimus  
 Ætas ? quid intactum nefasti  
 Liquimus ? Unde manus juvenus  
 Metu deorum continuit ? Quibus  
 Pepercit aris \*?*

Alas ! the shameless scars ! the guilty deeds,  
 When by a brother's hand a brother bleeds !  
 What crimes have we, a harden'd age, not dar'd ?  
 What sacred altars have our rash youth spar'd ?  
 Not by the fear of heaven's wrath debarr'd. }

I do not presently conclude in the style of a prophet,

*ipsa si velit salus,  
 Servare prorsus non potest banc familiam †.*

This family does so behave  
 That providence them cannot save.

We are not however perhaps at the last gasp. The preservation of states is a thing that in all likelihood surpasses our understanding. A civil government, is, as Platō says, a mighty thing, and so hard to be dissolved, that it holds out many times against mortal and intestine diseases, against the injury of unjust laws, against tyranny, the extravagance and ignorance of magistrates, and the licentiousness and sedition of the people. We compare ourselves in all our fortunes to what is above us, and still look towards our betters : But let us measure ourselves with what is below us, there is no one so miserable but he may find a thousand examples that will administer consolation to him. It is our vice that we more unwillingly look upon what is above, than willingly on what is below us ; and Solon was used to say,

\* Hor. lib. i. ode 35. ver. 33.

† Ter. Adel. act. 4. scene 7. ver. 43.



that were we to make a heap of all evils together, there is no person who would not rather choose to bear with those which he suffers, than to come to an equal division with all other men from that heap, and take his particular share. Our government is indeed sick, but there have been others sicker, without dying. The gods play at tennis with us, and bandy us every way. *Enim vero dii nos homines quasi pilas habent* \*.

The stars have fatally destined the state of Rome for an example of what they could do in this kind: in it are comprized all the forms and adventures that concern a state;

Witness the  
Roman empire,  
and its divers  
forms.

all that order or disorder, good or evil fortune can do. Who then can despair of his condition, seeing the shocks and commotions wherewith she was tost, and yet supported them all? If the extent of dominion be the health of a state, which I by no means think it is, (and Isocrates pleases me, when he instructs Nicocles not to envy princes who have large dominions †, but them who know how to preserve those that fall into their hands) that of Rome was never so sound, as when it was most sick: the worst of her forms was the most fortunate. A man can hardly discern any image of government under the first emperors; it was the most horrible and gross confusion that can be imagined. It supported it notwithstanding, and therein continued, preserving a monarchy not limited within its own bounds, but so many nations, so differing, so remote, so ill-affected, so irregularly commanded, and so unjustly conquered,

————— *nec gentibus ullis.*

*Commodat in populum, terræ pelagique potentem,  
Invidiam fortuna suam* ‡.

No foreign potentates did fortune yet  
Inspire with envy against Rome so great,  
That over kingdoms, and their mighty kings,  
O'er land and seas she stretch'd her eagle's wings.

\* The words of Plautus in his prologue to the Captives, ver. 22.

† Isocrates ad Nicoclem, p. 34.

‡ Lucan. lib. i. ver. 82.



Every thing that totters does not tumble. The texture of so great a body holds by more nails than one. It holds even by its antiquity, like old buildings, from which the foundations are worn away by time, without rough-cast or mortar, which yet live and support themselves by their own weight;

— *nec jam validis radicibus hærens,  
Pondere tuta suo est* \*.

Like an old lofty oak, that heretofore  
Great cong'rors spoils, and sacred trophies bore.

Montaigne  
very rationally  
concludes from  
the general cor-  
ruption of the  
states of Eu-  
rope that  
France may be  
able to stand  
her ground.

Moreover, to discover only the flank and the graff, is not the right way. In order to judge of the security of a place, it must be examined which way approaches can be made to it, and in what condition the assailant is. Few vessels sink with their own weight, and without some exterior violence. Let us cast our eyes where we will; every thing about us totters: look into all the great states, both of christendom and elsewhere, that are known to us, you will there see evident menaces of alteration and ruin.

*Et sua sunt illis incommoda, parque per omnes  
Tempestas.*

They all promiscuous in misfortunes share,  
And the rude tempest rages everywhere.

Astrologers may very well as they do, warn us of great revolutions, and approaching changes: their starry prophecies are present and palpable, they need not look up to heaven to foretel this. There is not only consolation to be extracted from this universal combination of ills and menaces,

\* Lucan. lib. 1. ver. 138.

† Virg. Æneid. 11.



but moreover, some hopes of the continuation of our state; forasmuch as naturally nothing falls, where all does. An universal sickness is particular health: conformity is an enemy to dissolution. For my part, I despair not, and fancy that I discover ways to save us.

*Deus hæc fortasse benigna  
Reducet in sedem vice\*.*

The gods perhaps with gracious sway  
Will soon restore the happy day.

Who knows but that God will have it happen, as in human bodies that are purged, and recover a better state of health by long and grievous maladies? What weighs the most with me, is, that in reckoning the symptoms of our ill, I see as many natural ones, and such as heaven sends us, and that are properly its own, as of those that are owing to our irregularity and imprudence. The very stars seem to declare, that we have continued long enough, and beyond the ordinary term: and this also afflicts me, that the nearest mischief which threatens us, is, not an alteration in the entire and solid mass, but its dissipation and divulsion; the greatest of all our fears.

I moreover fear, lest in these ravings of mine, the treachery of my memory, Repetition disagreeable. should through inadvertence make me write the same thing twice. I hate to examine myself; and never review, but with an ill-will, what has once escaped my pen. I here set down nothing new of instruction. These are common thoughts; and having perhaps conceived them an hundred times, I am afraid I have set them down somewhere else already. Repetition is every where disgusting, though it were in Homer; but much more in things that have only a superficial and transitory shew. I do not love inculcation, even

\* Horat. Epod. ode 13. ver. 10.



in useful things, as in Seneca. Neither the custom of the Stoical school, to repeat upon every subject at length, the general principles and suppositions, and always to advance common and universal reasons.

Our author's  
treacherous  
memory.

My memory grows worse every day :

*Pocula Letheos ut si ducentia somnos  
Arente fauce traxerim.*

Apt to let slip my argument or theme,  
As if I had drank deep of Lethe's stream.

Though hitherto, thanks be to God, no difficulty has happened; and though others seek time and opportunity to think of what they have to say, I must for the future avoid all such preparation, for fear of tying myself to some indispensable obligation. To be tied and bound to a thing, and to depend upon so weak an instrument as my memory, puts me quite out : I never read this following story, but I am offended at it with a proper and natural resentment. Lyncestes, accused of conspiracy against Alexander, the day that he was brought before the army, according to custom, to be heard what he could say for himself, had prepared a studied speech †, of which, with hesitation and trembling he pronounced some words; but still more perplexed, whilst he was struggling with his memory, and recollecting what he had to say, the soldiers who were nearest levelled their pikes at him, and killed him, looking upon him as guilty. His astonishment and silence they judged as a confession. For having had so much leisure to prepare himself in prison, they concluded that it was not his memory that failed him, but that his conscience hampered his tongue, and stopped his speech. This was very justly inferred. The place, the spectators, and the expectation, astonish him, even at the

\* Horat. Epod. ode xiv. ver. 3.

† Q. Curt. lib. vii. cap. 1.



time, when it was incumbent on him to speak the best he could. What can a man do, when his life is dependant on his oratory?

For my part, the very being tied to what I am to say is enough to make me lose hold of it. When I wholly commit and refer myself to my memory, I lay so much stress upon it, that it sinks under me, and startles at the burden. So much as I trust to it, so much do I put myself out of my own power, even so as to know what countenance to put on; and have been sometimes very much put to it to conceal the slavery wherein I was shackled; when at the time my design was to manifest in speaking a perfect negligence both of face and accent, and to shew casual and unpremeditated motions, as rising from present occasions; chusing rather to say nothing to the purpose, than to shew that I came prepared to speak well; a thing especially unbecoming a man of my profession, and a thing of too great obligation upon him that cannot retain much; the preparation is far short of producing the expected effect. A man oft strips himself to his doublet to leap no further than he would have done in his gown. *Nil est his qui placere volunt, tam adversarium, quam expectatio*\*; “nothing is so mortifying to those who are desirous to please, as raising an expectation of them before-hand.” It is recorded of the orator Curius†, that when he proposed the division of his oration into three or four parts, it often happened, either that he forgot some one, or added one or two more. I have always avoided falling into this inconvenience, out of a hatred to these promises and prescriptions, not only from a distrust of my memory, but also because this method relishes too much of the artist. *Simpliciora militares decent*. It is enough that in the mind I am in at present, I will never more take upon me to speak in a place of respect; for as to speaking, when a man reads his speech, besides that it is very absurd, it is a mighty disadvantage to those who naturally could give

Even when he  
had learnt a  
speech by heart:

\* Cic. Acad. lib. iv. cap. 4.

† Cicero in lib. de claris Oratoribus, cap. 60.



it a grace by action ; and much less will I throw myself upon the mercy of my present invention ; it is heavy and perplexed, and such as would never furnish me in sudden and important necessities.

He is ready  
enough to make  
additions to his  
book, but not  
corrections.

Permit, reader, this Essay its course also, and this third fitting to finish the rest of my picture, I add, but I correct not ; first, because I conceive, that a man having once made a transfer of his labours to the world, has no farther right to them ; let him do better if he can in some new undertaking, but not adulterate what he has already sold ; of such dealers nothing should be bought till after they are dead : let them well consider what they do, before they produce them to the light. Who hastens them ? My book is always the same, saving that upon every new edition, (that the buyer may not go away quite empty handed) I take the liberty to add as it were by an ill jointed inlaying, some few supernumerary things. They are no other but over-weight, that do not disfigure the primitive form of those Essays, but by a little ambitious subtilty, give a kind of particular repute to every one that follows. From thence however there will easily happen some transposition of chronology ; my stories taking place according to their fitness, and not always according to the age. Secondly, because that for what concerns myself, I fear to lose by the change : my understanding does not always go forward, it goes backward too. I do not much less suspect my fancies for being the second or third, than for being the first, either present, or past ; we oft correct ourselves as foolishly as we do others. I am grown older by a great many years since my first publications, which were in the year 1580 : but I very much doubt whether I am grown an inch the wiser. I now, and I anon, are two several persons ; but whether the better, now or anon, I am not able to determine. It were a fine thing to be old, if we only travelled towards improvement ; but it is a drunken, stumbling, reeling, ill-favoured motion, like that of reeds, which the air casually waves to and fro as it lists.

Antiochus



Antiochus had in his youth written strenuously in favour of the Academy \*, but in his old age he wrote as much against it : which of these two soever I should follow, would not he be still Antiochus ? After having established the uncertainty, to go about to establish the certainty of human opinions, was it not to establish doubt, and not certainty, and to promise, that had he yet another age to live, he would be always upon terms of altering his judgment, not so much for the better, as for something else ? The public favour has given me a little more confidence than I expected ; but what I most fear, is, lest I should glut the world with my writings : I had rather of the two spur my reader than tire him : as a learned man of my time has done. Praise is always pleasing, let it come from whom, or upon what account it will ; yet ought a man to understand why he is commended, that he may be self-consistent. The vulgar and common esteem is seldom right ; and I am mistaken, if amongst the writings of my time, the worst are not those which have most gained the popular applause. For my part, I return my thanks to those good-natured men, who are pleased to take my weak endeavours in good part. The faults of the workmanship are no where so apparent, as in a matter which of itself has no recommendation. Blame me not, reader, for those that slip in here, by the fancy or inadvertency of others ; every hand, every artizan, contribute their own materials. I neither concern myself with orthography (and only direct if after the old way) nor pointing, being very inexpert both in the one and the other. Where they wholly break the sense, I am very little concerned, for they at least discharge me ; but where they substitute a false one, as they so often do, and wrest me to their conception, they ruin me. When the sentence nevertheless is not strong enough in proportion to my poor ability, a civil person ought to reject it

The writings of Antiochus corrected by himself in his more mature age.

Orthography and pointing despised.



as none of mine. Whoever knows how lazy I am, and how indulgent to my own humour, will easily believe that I had rather write as many more Essays, than be tied to revise these for so puerile a correction.

Montaigne very much exposed at his own house to the insults of his neighbours during the civil wars.

I was saying elsewhere, that being planted in the deepest mine of this new metal, i. e. the very center of this new religion, I am not only deprived of any great familiarity with men of other kind of manners than my own, and of other opinions, by which they hold together, as by a tie that supersedes all other obligations; but I even do not live without danger, amongst men to whom all things are equally lawful, and of whom the most part cannot offend the laws more than they have already done; from whence the greatest degree of licentiousness does proceed. All the particular circumstances respecting me being considered, I do not find one man of my country, who pays so dear for the defence of our laws both in cost and damages (to use the phrase of the lawyers) as myself. And some there are who brag of their ardor and zeal, that if things were justly weighed, do much less than I. My house, as one that has ever been free to all comers, and at the service of all, (for I could never be induced to make a garrison of it, which is most desired when the war is farthest off) has sufficiently merited the popular regard, so that it would be a hard matter to insult over me upon my own dung-hill; and I look upon it as a wonderful and exemplary thing, that it yet continues a virgin free from blood and plunder during so long a storm, and so many revolutions and tumults in the neighbourhood. For to confess the truth, it had been possible enough, for a man of my complexion, to have quitted any one constant and continued form whatever. But the invasions and incursions, alterations and vicissitudes of fortune round about me, have hitherto more exasperated than mollified the humour of the country; and involve me in fresh difficulties and dangers that are invincible.

I escape



I escape, it is true, but am troubled that it is more by chance, and something of my own prudence, than by justice, and am not satisfied to be out of the protection

How disagreeable this sort of dependancy was to him.

of the laws, and under any other safe-guard than theirs. As matters stand, I live above one half by the favour of others, which is an untoward obligation. I do not like to owe my safety either to the generosity or affection of great persons, who concur in my legality and liberty, or to the obliging manners of my predecessors, or my own. For what if I was another kind of man? If my deportment, and the frankness of my conversation oblige my neighbours or relations, it is cruel that they should acquit themselves of that obligation, in only permitting me to live; and that they should say, "we allow him the free liberty of having divine service read in his own private chapel, all the churches round about being destroyed, and grant him the use of his goods, and the fruition of his life, as one that protects our wives and cattle in time of need." For

Lycurgus the general trustee for all his fellow-citizens.

my house has for many descents shared in the reputation of Lycurgus, the Athenian, who was the general trustee and treasurer of his fellow-citizens\*. Now I am clearly of opinion, that a man should live by his own right and authority, and not either by recompence or favour. How many gallant men have rather chose to lose life, than to owe it? I hate to subject myself to any sort of obligation, but above all, to the dues of honour. I think nothing so expensive to me as what is given me, and that because my will lies at pawn under the title of gratitude, and more willingly accept of offices that are to be sold; being really of opinion, that for the last I give nothing but money, but for the other I give myself.

The tie that holds me by the laws of courtesy, binds me, I think, more than that of legal constraint; and I am much more at ease when bound by a scrivener,

The obligations of probity, as well as promises, to be strictly observed.

\* Plutarch, in the Lives of the ten Orators, of whom Lycurgus was the seventh, chap. 1.

than



than by myself. Is it not reason that my conscience should be much more engaged when men simply rely upon it? In a bond, my faith owes nothing because it has nothing lent it. Let them trust to the faith and security they have taken, which is not mine; I had much rather break the wall of a prison, and the laws themselves, than my probity and word: I am nice, even to superstition, in keeping my promises, and therefore upon all occasions have a care to make them uncertain and conditional. To those of no great moment, I add the jealousy of my own rule to make it weight; it racks and oppresses me with its own interest. Even in actions that are wholly my own, and free, if I once say it, I conceive that I have bound myself, and that delivering it to the knowledge of another, I have positively enjoined it to my own performance. Methinks I promise it, if I but say it, and therefore am not apt to say much of that kind. The sentence that I pass upon myself is sharper and more severe than that of a judge, who only considers it in the light of a common obligation; but my conscience looks upon it with a more severe and penetrating eye. I lag in those duties to which I should be compelled if I did not go. *Hoc ipsum ita justum est quod recte fit, si est voluntarium*\*; "even that which is well done, is only just, when it is voluntary." If the action has not some splendor of liberty, it has neither grace nor honour.

*Quod me jus cogit, vix voluntate impetrent* †.

That which the laws have power to constrain,  
They from my will would hardly e'er obtain.

Where necessity draws me, I love to let my will take its own course. *Quia quicquid imperio cogitur, exigenti magis quam præstanti acceptum refertur*; "for whatever is

\* Cicero de Offic. lib. i. cap. 9.

† Ter. Adel. act iii. scene 5. ver. 44. of Dacier's edit.



“compelled by power, is more ascribed to him that  
 “exacts, than to him that performs it.” I know  
 some who follow this rule, even to injustice, who will  
 sooner give than restore, sooner lend than pay, and will  
 do those the least good to whom they are most obliged.  
 I am of a quite contrary humour.

I so much love to disengage and re-  
 lease myself, that I have sometimes  
 looked upon the ingratitude, affronts,  
 and indignities which I have received  
 from those, to whom either by nature  
 or accident I was bound in some duty  
 of friendship, as an advantage to me,  
 taking this occasion of their ill-usage  
 for an acquittance and discharge of so much of my  
 debt. And though I still continue to pay them all the  
 apparent offices of common civility, I notwithstanding  
 find myself very sparing of doing that upon the account  
 of justice, which I did upon the score of affection, and  
 am a little eased of my former attention and solicitude by  
 my inward will. *Est prudentis sustinere ut cursum, sit  
 impetum benevolentiae*\*; “it is the part of a wise man  
 “to keep as tight a curb upon the heat of his friend-  
 “ship, as upon the fury of his horse;” my friendship  
 being too urging and pressing where I take, at least,  
 for a man who loves not to be importuned. And this  
 husbanding my friendship serves me for a sort of conso-  
 lation in the imperfections of those with whom I am  
 concerned. I am sorry they are the less to be valued  
 for it, but so it is, that I also diminish in my applica-  
 tion and engagement towards them. I approve of a  
 man that is the less fond of his child for having a scald-  
 head or being crooked, and not only when he is ill-  
 natured, but also when he is unhappy and base-born,  
 (for God himself has made abatement from his value  
 and natural estimation) provided he carry himself in  
 this coldness of affection with moderation and exact  
 justice. Proximity lessens not defects with me, but  
 rather makes them greater.

He so much  
 hated to be obli-  
 gated that he  
 thought it an  
 advantage to be  
 disengaged from  
 his attachment  
 to persons by  
 their ingra-  
 titude.

\* Cicero de Amicitia, cap. 17.



Why he is for  
dispensing with  
his acknow-  
ledgements even  
towards princes.

After all, according to what I understand in the science of benefits and acknowledgement (which is a subtle science, and of great use) I know no person whatever more free and less indebted than I am at this hour. What I do owe, is simply to common and natural obligations; as to any thing else, no man is more absolutely clear.

———— *nec sunt mihi nota potentum*  
*Munera* \* . ———

Nor did I e'er take gifts from men in pow'r.

Princes give me enough, if they take nothing from me; and do me good enough, if they do me no harm: that is all I ask of them. Oh, how am I obliged to Almighty God, who has been pleased that I should receive all I have, immediately from his bounty, and particularly reserved all my obligation to himself! How earnestly do I beg of his divine mercy, that I may never owe real thanks to any one! O happy liberty wherein I have hitherto lived! May it continue with me to the last. I endeavour to have no absolute need of any one. *In me omnis spes est mihi* †; “all my hope is in myself.” This is what every one may be able to place in himself, but more easily they whom God has sheltered from natural and urgent necessities. It is a wretched and dangerous thing to depend upon another. Ourselves, on whom is our most just and safest dependance, are not sufficiently assured. I have nothing mine but myself, and yet the possession is in part defective and borrowed. I fortify myself both in courage, which is the strongest assistant ‡, and also in fortune;

\* Virg. *Æn.* lib. xii. ver. 519.

† Ter. *Adelph.* act. iii. sc. 5. ver. 9.

‡ In the fourth edition of 1588, when this third volume was first published, Montaigne only says, “I cultivate and enlarge myself with all the care I can, that I may have wherewithal to satisfy me when I am by all  
“ abandoned.”



time, therein to satisfy myself, though every thing else should forsake me. Eleus Hippias \* not only furnished himself with science, that he might at need chearfully retire from all other company to enjoy the Muses, nor with the knowledge of philosophy only to teach his soul to be contented with it, and bravely to subsist without external conveniencies, when fate would have it so; he was, besides, so curious as to learn cookery, to shave himself, to make his own cloaths, his own shoes and drawers, and, as far as possible to rely upon himself, and to shift without the assistance of others. A man more freely and chearfully enjoys borrowed conveniencies, when it is not an enjoyment forced and constrained by necessity, and when a man has in his own will and fortune wherewith to live without them. I know myself very well. But I can hardly expect to meet with such pure generosity, such free and frank hospitality from any person, as would not appear to me unhandsome, tyrannical, and tainted with reproach, if necessity had reduced me to it. As giving is an ambitious quality and prerogative, so is accepting a quality of submission. Witness the injurious and quarrelsome refusal that Bajazet

"abandoned." It is my opinion that it would have been best if he had stopped there; because "for a man to arm himself with courage so as to be contented though he should be on all sides abandoned," is the greatest effort that man is capable of. Nor is this point attainable but by practice, which whoever has once arrived to, he has nothing more to do but to persist in it, in order to be sheltered from the insults of fortune. Now to add after this "to fortify himself in fortune," &c. is reducing the first thought to nothing, or making a distinction where in fact there is none. This criticism does not appear to me to be too refined; if it be, I consent that it may not have a place in any future edition of Montaigne's essays.

\* Eleus Hippias made his boast at the Olympic games, that there was nothing in any art of which he was ignorant, not only of the liberal arts, as geometry, music, literature, and poetry, together with natural philosophy, ethics and politics, but that he made with his own hand the ring and the very cloaths he wore, &c. as above. Cicero de Oratore, lib. iii. cap. 32. If at the time here mentioned there had been public places in Greece, where men of the first rank had spent the prime of life in splendor, in gaming, or in doing nothing, poor Hippias, instead of gaining applause at the Olympic Games would have been hissed out of the theatre.



made of the presents that Themir sent him : and those that were offered in the behalf of the emperor Solymán to the emperor of Calicut, were so much disdained by him, that he not only rudely rejected them ; saying, that neither honor any of his predecessors had ever been wont to take, and that it was their office to give ; but moreover caused the ambassadors sent for that purpose to be put into a dungeon. When Thetis, says Aristotle, flatters Jupiter, when the Lacedæmonians flatter the Athenians, they never put them in mind of the good they have done them, which is always odious, but of the benefits they have received from them ; they who I see so familiarly employ every one in their affairs, and thrust themselves into so much obligation, would never do it, did they but relish the sweetness of pure liberty as I do, and did they but weigh, as wise men should, the burthen of an obligation. It is sometimes perhaps returned, but it is never dissolved ; this is a miserable slavery to a man that loves to be at full liberty upon all accounts. My acquaintance, both better and meaner men than myself, are able to say whether they have ever known a man less importuning, soliciting, entreating, and less burdensome to others than I have been. And in this, it is no great wonder, if I am not to be paralleled, since so many parts of my manners contribute to it ; as a little natural pride, an impatience of being refused, the contraction of my desires and designs, an incapacity for all kind of business, and my most beloved qualities, idleness, and freedom ; from all these together I have conceived a mortal hatred to being obliged to or by any other than myself. I leave no stone unturned, rather than employ the beneficence of another in any slight or important occasion or necessity whatever. My friends strangely importune me, when they advise me to call in a third person ; and I think it as painful to disengage him who is indebted to me, by making use of him, as it is to engage myself to him that owes me nothing : these conditions being removed, provided they require of me nothing of any great trouble or care, (for  
I have



I have declared mortal war against all care) I am easily intreated, and ready to do service to every one that needs it. Yet I have, I confess, more avoided receiving than sought occasions of giving; and, according to Aristotle, it is much more easy. My fortune has allowed me but little to do others good with, and the little it can afford is put into a pretty close hand. Had I been born a person of rank, I would have been ambitious to have made myself beloved, not to make myself feared or admired; shall I more vainly express it? I would have been as proud to please as to do good. Cyrus very wisely, and, by the mouth of a great captain, and better philosopher, prefers his bounty and benefits much before his valour and warlike conquests. And the elder Scipio, wherever he would raise his esteem, sets a higher value upon his affability and humanity, than his prowess and victories, and has always this glorious saying in the mouth, “that he has given his enemies as much cause to love him, as his friends.” I will say then, that if a man must of necessity owe something, it ought to be by a more lawful claim than that whereof I am speaking, to the necessity I am engaged in by this miserable war; and not by so great a debt as that of my total preservation; a debt that overwhelms me. I have a thousand times gone to bed at my own house with an apprehension that I should be betrayed and murdered that very night, compounding with fortune, that it might be without terror, and with quick dispatch; and after my Pater-noster have cried out,

*Impius hæc tam culta novalia miles habebit \* ?*

Shall impious soldier have these new-plow'd lands?

What remedy? it is the place of my birth, and most of my ancestors have here fixed their affection and name; we harden ourselves to whatever we are accustomed.

\* Virg. Eclog. i. ver. 71.



And in so miserable a condition as ours is, custom is a great bounty of nature, which takes off the acuteness of many evils that we suffer. A civil war has this with it worse than other wars have, to make us all stand centry in our own houses.

*Quam miserum, portâ vitam muroque tueri,  
Vixque suæ tutum viribus esse domus \*!*

To one's own walls and gates 'tis wretched sure  
To trust one's life, yet scarce to be secure.

It is a grievous extremity for a man to be straitened for room, and to be disturbed in his own house. The country where I live is always the first that takes up arms, and the last that lays them down, and which never enjoys an entire calm.

*Tum quoque cum pax est, trepidant formidine belli †.*

In time of peace, they quake for fear of war.

—————*quoties pacem fortuna laceffit ;  
Hac iter est bellis ; melius, fortuna, dedisset  
Orbe sub Eoo sedem, gelidaque sub Arcto,  
Errantesque domos ‡.*

Oh ill built city, too, too near the Gaul !  
Oh sadly situated place ! when all  
The world hath peace, this is the scene of war,  
And first that is invaded: happier far  
Might we have liv'd in farthest North or East,  
Or wand'ring tents of Scythia, than possess  
The edge of Italy.

\* Ovid. Trist. lib. iv. eleg. 1. ver. 69.  
eleg. 10. ver. 67.

† Ovid. Trist. lib. iii.  
‡ Lucan. lib. i. ver. 255. 256. .... 251. 252. 253.



My carelessness and indolence sometimes fortify me against these considerations, and they also in some measure lead us on to resolution. I oft imagine and expect mortal dangers with a kind of delight \*. I stupidly plunge myself head-long into death, without considering or taking a view of it, as into a dark and deep vortex, which swallows me up in a trice, and smothers me in an instant by a profound sleep, without any sense of pain, or care. And in these short and violent deaths, the consequence that I foresee administers more consolation to me than the effects do fear. They say, that as life is not better for being long, so death is better for not being long. I do not so much avoid the thoughts of death as I enter into confidence with it. I wrap and shroud myself in the storm that is to blind and hurry me away with a sudden and insensible attack. Moreover, if it should fall out, (as some gardeners say of roses and violets, that they are more odoriferous by growing near garlick and onions, by reason that the last suck and imbibe what bad smell there is in the soil,) that these depraved natures should also attract all the malignity of my air and climate, and render me so much better and purer by their vicinity, that I should not lose all; that is not so; but there may be something in this, that goodness is

\* To comprehend the author's true meaning here, the words must be considered with regard to their necessary connection with what goes before. Montaigne represents himself as surrounded in his house by a gang of banditti, who are authorised by war to commit all manner of crimes with impunity. In such a situation wherein he is always in danger of having his throat cut, and in a mortal dread of seeing himself every moment at the mercy of those villains, he one while fancies himself actually in their hands, and feeling a kind of pleasure to be at last delivered thereby on a sudden from the continual anguish which rendered his life insupportable. Full of these ideas he stupidly plunges himself headlong, as he says above, into death, without taking a view of it, as into a dark and deep vortex, which swallows him up, &c. Which is as much as to say, that by taking his resolution he expects when he least thinks of it, to be in that state of surprize and horror from the barbarity of those villains who shall come to knock him on the head, or cut his throat before he has time to look about him. The images which Montaigne here makes use of are lively but innocent, and very natural, and such as no judicious fair critic will, I believe, ever find fault with.



more beautiful and attractive when it is rare, and that contrariety and diversity binds and shuts up well-doing within itself, and inflames it by the jealousy of opposition and by vain-glory. Thieves and robbers (of their special favour) have no particular spite at me; no more have I to them: If I had, I would have my hands too full. Consciences of the same cast are lodged under several sorts of robes, like cruelty, treachery, and rapine; and so much the worse as they are the more mischievous, and the more secure, and the darker by being concealed under the colour of the laws. I do not so much hate a professed injury, as one that is treacherous; an enemy in arms, as an enemy in a gown. Our fever has seized upon a body that is not much the worse for it. There was fire before, and now it is broke out into a flame. The noise is greater, the evil much the same. I usually answer such as ask me the reason of my travels, "that I know very well what I fly from, but not what I seek." If they tell me that there may be as little health amongst strangers, and their manners are no purer than ours; I first reply, that this is a hard case.

*Tam multa scelerum facies \**.

Where crimes in many shapes abound.

Secondly, that it is always an advantage to change an ill condition for one that is uncertain, and that the ills of others ought not to afflict us so much as our own.

The commen-  
dation of Paris. I will not here omit, that I never rail so much against France, as to be out of humour with Paris; that city has ever had my heart from my infancy; and it has fallen out to me, as of excellent things, that the more of other fine cities I have seen since, the more the beauty of this gains upon my affection. I love it for its own sake, and more in its

\* Virg. Georg. lib. i. ver. 506.



own native being, than the addition of foreign pomp; I love it tenderly, even with all its warts and blemishes. I am not a Frenchman but by this great city, great in people, great in the felicity of her situation; but above all, great and incomparable in variety and diversity of commodities; the glory of France, and one of the most noble ornaments of the world. May God of his goodness drive our divisions far from it. While it remains entire and united, I think it safe from all other violence. I give it caution, that of all the parties, that will be the worst that shall set it at variance; I have no fears for her, but for her own sake; and certainly I have as much fear for her as for any other city in the kingdom. Whilst she continues, I shall never want a retreat where I may be safe, sufficient to make me amends for parting with any other retreat whatever.

It is not because Socrates had said so, but because it is in truth my own humour, and perhaps too much so. I look upon all men as my countrymen, and embrace

Montaigne considered all nations as his countrymen.

a Polander as heartily as a Frenchman, preferring the universal and common tie, to this national tie. I am not much taken with the sweetness of a native air: acquaintance wholly new, and wholly my own, appear to me full as good as the other common and accidental ones with our neighbours. Friendships that are purely of our own acquiring, ordinarily surpass those to which we are joined by the communication of the clime or of blood. Nature has placed us in the world free and unbound; we confine ourselves to certain limits, like the kings of Persia, who obliged themselves to drink no other water but that of the river Choaspes, foolishly quit claim to their right of usage in all other streams; and as far as concerned themselves, dried up all the other rivers of the world. What Socrates did towards the end, to look upon a sentence of banishment, as worse than a sentence of death against him, I shall, I think, never be such an old fool, or so strictly bigotted to my own country, as to be of



that opinion. Such celestial lives as his have many ideas, which I embrace more by esteem than affection; and they have some also so elevated and extraordinary, that I cannot embrace them so much as by esteem, because I cannot conceive them. This humour was very effeminate in a man that thought the whole world his city. It is true, that he disdained travel, and had hardly ever set his foot out of the Attic territories. What say you to his grudging the money his friends offered to save his life, and his refusal to come out of prison by the mediation of others, because he would not disobey the laws, at a time when they were otherwise so much corrupted? These examples are of the first rate for me; of the second there are others that I could find out in this same person. Many of these rare examples surpass the force of my action; nay some of them likewise surpass the force of my judgment.

The advantages  
which Montaigne  
reaped by  
travel.

These reasons set aside, travel is in my opinion a profitable exercise; the soul is therein continually employed in observing things new and unknown. And I do not know, as I have often said, a better school wherein to form life, than by incessantly exposing to it the diversity of so many other lives, fancies, and usages; and to make it relish so perpetual a variety of the forms of human nature. The body is therein neither idle nor overwrought, and this moderate motion puts it in breath. I can keep on horseback, as much tormented with the stone as I am, without alighting or being weary, for eight or ten hours together.

*Vires ultra sortemque senectæ\*.*

Beyond the strength and common lot of age.

No weather hurts me, but by the parching heat of a scorching sun; for the umbrellas made use of in Italy,

\* Virg. *Æneid.* lib. vi. ver. 114.



ever since the time of the ancient Romans, are a greater burthen to the arm than a relief to the head. I would fain know where was the industry of the Persians so long ago, and in the infancy of their luxury, to make such ventilators, and plant such shades about their abodes, as Xenophon reports they did. I love rain, and to dabble in the dirt, like the ducks; the change of air and climate never concern me: every sky is alike to me. I am only troubled with inward ailments, which I breed within myself, and those are not so frequent in travel. I am hard to be got out, but when once upon the road, I hold out as well as the best. I take as much pains in little, as in great undertakings; and to equip myself, for a short journey, if but to visit a neighbour, as for a long one. I have learned to travel after the Spanish fashion, and to make but one stage of tolerable length; and in excessive heats, I always travel by night, from sun-set to sun-rising. The other method of baiting by the way, in haste and hurry to gobble up a dinner, is, especially in short days, very inconvenient. My horses thereby perform the better, for never any horse tired under me, that was able to hold out the first day's journey: I water them at every brook I meet, and only take care they have so much way to go before I come to my inn, as will digest the water in their bellies. My being so loth to rise in a morning, gives my servants leisure to dine at their ease before they set out. For my own part, I never eat too late; my appetite comes to me in eating, and not else, and am never hungry but at table.

Some of my friends blame me for continuing this travelling humour, being married and old. But they are in the wrong; for it is the best time for a man to leave his family, when he has put it into a way of subsisting without him, and continuing as he left it. It is indeed much greater imprudence to abandon it to a less faithful housekeeper, and one who will be less solicitous to look after your affairs.

Unjustly blamed  
for travelling  
when old and  
married.

The



The most useful and the most honourable accomplishment of a mother of a family.

The most useful and honourable knowledge and employment for the mother of a family, is the management of household affairs. I see some that are covetous indeed, but very few that are saving. It is the supreme quality of a woman, and what the man ought to seek after before any other, as the only dowry that tends to ruin or to preserve our families. Let men say what they will, according to the experience I have learned, I require in married women the economical virtue above all other virtues; I put my wife to it, as a concern of her own, leaving her by my absence the whole government of my affairs. I am ashamed to see, in several families, the master of which has been bustling about all morning, I am sorry to see him return at noon quite jaded and ruffled to find his madam just got out of her bed, and dressing herself at the toilet. This is for queens to do, it would be improper even in them. It is ridiculous, and unjust, that the laziness of our wives should be maintained with our own sweat and labour. No man, as far as I can, shall have a clearer and a more quiet and free enjoyment of his estate than I. If the husband furnish matter, nature herself requires that the wife find the form.

The conjugal friendship grows warm by absence.

As to the duties of conjugal friendship, which some think to be cooled by this absence, I am not of that opinion; it is on the contrary an intelligence that easily cools and is hurt by a too close and constant attendance. Every strange woman appears graceful, and every one finds by experience, that being continually together is not so pleasing, as to part for a time, and meet again. These interruptions give me a fresh gust to enjoy my family, and render my own house more pleasant to me. Change of place warms my appetite, now to one then to the other. I know that the arms of friendship are long enough to reach and join hands from the one end of the world to the other, especially, when there is a continual communication of offices that rouse the obligation and



and remembrance of it. The Stoics say, that there is so great a connection and relation amongst wise men, that he who dines in France, feeds his companion in Egypt; and that whoever but holds out his finger, in what part of the world soever, all the wise men upon the habitable earth feel themselves assisted by it. Fruition and possession principally appertain to the imagination; and this more fervently and constantly embraces what it is in quest of, than what we have hold of. Let a man but consider his daily amusements, and he will find, that he is most absent from his friend when in his company. His presence releases your attention, and gives your thoughts liberty to absent themselves at every turn, for every occasion. When I am at Rome, I keep and govern my house, and the conveniencies I there left, see my walls rise, my trees shoot, and my revenue increase, or decrease, very near as well as when I am there.

*Ante oculos errat domus, errat forma locorum\*.*

Still fondly I behold with fancy's eye,  
My house, and places that around it lie.

If we enjoy nothing but what we touch, we may say farewell to the money in our closets, and to our sons when they are gone a hunting. We will have them nearer to us. Is the garden, or half a day's journey from home so far? What is ten leagues, far or near? If near, what is eleven, twelve, or thirteen? and so on by degrees. In earnest, if there be a woman who can tell her husband what step ends the near, and what step begins the remote, I would advise her to stop between the two.

———— *excludat jurgia finis.*

Some certain point should finish the debate.

*Utor permissis, caudæque pilos ut equine  
Paulatim vella: et demum unum, demum etiam unum  
Dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi†.*

\* Ovid. Trist. lib. iii. eleg. 4.

† Horat. lib. ii. ep. i. ver. 38, 45.



I take the grant, and by degrees prevail;  
 Thus hair by hair, I pluck the horse's tail,  
 And while I take them one by one away  
 The numbers to a nought at last decay.

Let them in God's name call philosophy to their assistance; in whose teeth it may be cast, that since it neither discerns the one nor the other end of the joint betwixt the too much and the little, the long and the short, the light and the heavy, the near and the remote; and since it discovers neither the beginning nor the end, it must needs judge very uncertainly of the middle. *Rerum natura nullam nobis dedit cognitionem finium*\*; "nature has not given us any knowledge of the end of things." Are they not still wives and friends to the dead, who are not only at the end of this, but in the other world? We include those who have been, and those who are not yet, much more the absent. We did not promise in marriage to be continually brooding and twining together, like some little animals that we see, or tied like those of Karanti†, that were so bewitched in the conjunctive mood that they clung together ever after like the canine race. And a wife ought not so greedily to fix her eyes on her husband's fore-parts, that she cannot endure to see him turn his back, if occasion be. But may not this saying of that excellent painter of women's humours be here introduced, to shew the reasons of their complaints?

\* Cicer. Acad. lib. iv. cap. 29. † It is Saxo Grammaticus that has left us the story of these hagridden creatures, in the 14th book of his History of Denmark; where, speaking of the conversion of the people of Rugen, an island in the Baltic; he says, that the inhabitants of Karanti, or Kerantia, one of their towns, after having renounced their worship of idols, were nevertheless still afraid of their power, remembering how often they had been punished for their lewdness, when both sexes were tied together in the action after the manner of dogs, and even faster. Sometimes when they were taken in the fact they were, for the diversion of the people, hoisted upon a perch, the man on one side, and the woman on the other, without being able to separate. If this fact was true, one could hardly help inferring, that the devil was at that time much more severe or more mischievous than he is now.



*Uxor, si cesses, aut te amare cogitat,  
Aut tete amari, aut potare, aut animo obsequi.  
Et tibi bene esse soli, cum sibi sit male* †.

Thy wife, if thou stay'st long abroad, is mov'd,  
Thinking thou either lov'st, or art belov'd;  
Drinking, or something else, thyself to please,  
And that thou'rt well, whilst she is ill at ease.

Or may it not be, that of itself opposition and contradiction entertains and nourishes them, and that they sufficiently accommodate themselves, provided they incommode you?

In true friendship, wherein I am expert, I give myself more to my friend, than I attract him to me. I am not only better pleased in doing him service, than if he did me one; but, likewise, had rather he would do himself good than me, and he most serves me when he does so. And if absence be either pleasant or convenient for him, it is more acceptable to me than his presence; neither is it properly absence, when there are means of corresponding. I have sometimes made good use of our separation. We better filled, and further extended the possession of life in being parted. He lived, rejoiced, and saw for me, and I for him, as plainly as if he had himself been there; one part remained idle, and we confounded one another when we were together. The distance of place rendered the conjunction of our wills more rich. This insatiable desire of personal presence, implies some weakness in the fruition of souls.

The aim of true friendship.

The utility of the absence of a friend.

As for old age, which is alledged against me, it is for youth on the contrary to subject itself to the common opinions, and to curb itself for the sake of others. It was wherewith to please both the people

Whether old age ought to hinder us from travelling.

† Ter. Adel. act i. scene 1. ver. 7, &c.



and itself; we have but too much ado to please ourselves alone. As natural conveniencies fail us, let us support ourselves with those that are artificial. It is injustice to excuse youth for pursuing its pleasures, and to forbid old men to seek them. When young, I concealed my wanton passions with prudence; now I am old, I get rid of melancholy ones by a debauch\*. Sure it is that the Platonic laws forbid travel till forty or fifty years old, that it might be more useful and instructive at so mature an age. I would sooner subscribe to this other second article of the same laws, which forbids it after threescore; for at such an age you will never return from a long journey. What care I for that? I undertake it neither to return nor to finish it. I do it only to keep myself in motion whilst motion pleases me, and only walk for the walk's sake. They who hunt after a benefice, or a hare, run not; they only run who run at prison-bace, and to exercise their running. My design is divisible throughout, it is not grounded upon any great hopes; every day concludes my expectation. The journey of my life is carried on after the same manner; and yet I have seen places enough far off, where I could have wished to have been detained. And why not, if Chrysippus, Cleanthes, Diogenes, Zeno, Antipater, so many sages of the sourest sect†, cheerfully abandoned their country, without occasion to complain of it, and only for the enjoyment of

\* If that be, as I really think, Montaigne's sentiment, the word *debauch* must be taken in a moderate sense, and such as is suitable to Montaigne's genius and character, and to the subject he here treats of, that is to say, to his passion for travel, which he is pleased to term a *debauch*, by an excursion which is very common to him. There is scarce any writer who has more need than Montaigne of a judicious reader, and one especially that is fair and candid. His style, which abounds with bold expressions and figures, is very likely to deceive a cavelling censor, or to give a handle to those ill-natured critics who, without regard to truth, boldly censure the most innocent expressions, when they think they can represent them to other persons in a criminal light.

† Chrysippus was of Solis, Cleanthes of Assos, Diogenes of Babylon, Zeno of Citium in the isle of Cyprus, Antipater of Tarsus, all Stoic philosophers, who passed their lives at Athens, as Plutarch has observed in his *Treatise of banishment*, chap. 12.



another air? In earnest, that which most displeases me in all my travels, is, that I cannot resolve to settle my abode where I best like, but that I must always propose to myself to return, to accommodate myself to the common humours.

If I feared to die in any other place than that of my birth; if I thought I should die more uneasily remote from my own family, I would hardly go out of France; I would not without fear step out of my parish; for I feel death always twitching me by the throat, or by the back: but I am of another temper, death is in all places alike to me; yet might I have my choice, I think I would rather choose to die on horseback than in bed, out of my own house, and far enough from my own people. There is more heart-breaking than consolation in taking leave of one's friends; I am willing to omit this act of civility; for, of all the offices of friendship, that is the only one that is unpleasant; and I could with all my heart forget to bid this great and eternal farewell. If there be any convenience in so many standers-by, it produces an hundred inconveniences. I have seen many miserably dying, surrounded with all this train: it is a crowd that choaks them. It is against duty, and a testimony of little kindness, and little care, to permit you to die in quiet; one torments your eyes, another afflicts your ears, another tires your faltering tongue; you have neither sense nor limb that is not battered and bruised by them: your heart melts with pity to hear the lamentation of those that are your real friends, and perhaps with vexation, to hear the bewailings of others that are feigned and counterfeit. Whoever has been delicate in his taste, when well, is much more so in his weakness. In such a necessity a gentle hand is required, and suitable to his sentiments, to scratch him just in the place where he itches, or not to meddle with him at all. As we stood in need of a knowing woman † to bring us into the world, we

As indifferent as it was to Montaigne, where he died, he preferred to die abroad rather than at home; and why?

† Vizi a midwife, called in French *age femme*.



have much more need of a wiser man to help us out of it. Such a one, and a friend to boot, a man ought to purchase at any rate for such an occasion. I am not yet arrived at such a pitch of bravery and self-sufficiency, as to disdain all assistance, or defy all trouble in that hour. I endeavour to hide myself, and to make my exit by stealth, not through fear, but by art. I do not intend in this act of dying to give proof, and make a shew of my constancy. For whom should I do it? All the right and title I have to reputation will then cease. I content myself with a death collected within itself, quiet, solitary, and all my own, suitable to my retired and private life. Quite contrary to the Roman superstition, where a man was looked upon as unhappy, who

The eyes of dying persons closed by their nearest relations.

died without speaking, and that had not his nearest relations to close his eyes. I have enough to do to comfort myself, without the trouble of consoling others; too many thoughts in my head, to need that circumstances should possess me with new; and matter enough to entertain myself without borrowing. This critical minute is out of the share of society; it is the act of one single person. Let us live, and be merry amongst our friends, let us go among strangers to repine and die. A man may find those for his money that will shift his pillow, and rub his feet, and trouble him no more than he would have them; who will present him with an indifferent countenance, and suffer him to govern himself, and to complain according to his own method. I wean myself daily by my reason from this childish and inhumane humour, of desiring by our sufferings to move the compassion and mourning of our friends. We stretch our inconveniencies beyond their just extent when we extract tears from them, and the constancy in which we commend every one who supports his own adverse fortune, we accuse and reproach in our friends when the case is our own; we are not satisfied that they be only sensible of our condition, unless they be also afflicted. A man should extend his joy, but, as much as he can, contract his

grief:



grief: he that makes himself lamented without reason, is a man not to be lamented when there shall be real cause. To be always complaining, is the way never to be lamented; and he who too often calls for pity, is never commiserated by any. He that feigns himself dying when he is alive, is subject to be thought likely to live when he is dying. I have seen some, who have taken it in dudgeon when they have been told that they looked well, and that their pulse was regular, who refrained laughter, because it betrayed a recovery, and hated health, because it was not to be lamented: and, which is much worse, they were not women neither. I describe my infirmities; but such as they really are, at most, and avoid all ominous expressions and formal exclamations. If not mirth, at least a sedate countenance in the standers-by, is proper in the presence of a wise sick man. He does not quarrel with health, for seeing himself in a contrary condition. He is pleased to contemplate it sound and entire in others, and to enjoy it at least for company. He does not, because he feels himself melt away, abandon all thoughts of life, nor avoid common conversation. I am inclinable to study sickness whilst I am well; when it has seized me it will make its impression real enough, without the help of my imagination. We prepare ourselves before-hand for the journey we undertake and resolve upon; we leave the appointment of the hour when to take horse, to the company, and in their favour defer it. I find this unexpected advantage in the publication of my manners, that it in some sort serves me for a rule. I have sometimes some consideration of not betraying the history of my life. This public declaration obliges me to keep on my way, and not to give the eye to the image I have drawn of my qualities, commonly less deformed and contradicted than the malignity and infirmity of the judgments of this age would have them. The uniformity and simplicity of my manners produce a face of easy interpretation, but because the fashion is a little new, and unaccustomed, it gives great opportunity to slander. Yet so it is, that whoever will go about justly to injure me, I do think I

Mourning very improper about sick persons.



so assist his malice by my known and avowed imperfections, that he may that way glut his ill-nature, without skirmishing with the wind. If I myself, to prevent the accusation and discovery, confess enough to make his satire toothless, as he conceives, he is welcome to make use of his right of amplification, and extension; (offence has its rights beyond justice;) and let him make the roots of those vices I have laid open to him shoot up into trees: let him make his use, not only of those I am really infected with, but also of those that only threaten me; injurious vices both in quality and number. Let him cudgel me that way. I would willingly follow the example of the philosopher Bion\*. Antigonus being about to reproach him with the meanness of his birth, he presently cut him short, with this declaration†, "I am," said he, "the son of a slave, a butcher, and stigmatized, and of a whore my father married in the lowest of his fortune, who both of them were chastized for some misdemeanour. An orator bought me, when a child, and finding me a pretty and a forward boy, bred me up, and when he died left me all his estate, which I have brought into this city of Athens, and here settled myself to the study of philosophy." Let the historians never trouble themselves with inquiring after me. I shall tell them what I am; a free and generous confession enervates reproach, and disarms slander. So it is, that all things considered, I fancy men as oft commend, as undervalue me beyond reason. And methinks also, from my infancy, they have given me a place, in rank and degree of honour, rather above than below my right. I would find myself more at ease in a country where these degrees were either regulated or not regarded. Amongst men, when the difference about the precedence either of walking or sitting exceeds three replies, it is reputed uncivil. I never stick at giving, or taking place out of rule, to avoid the trouble of ceremony. And never denied pre-

\* Not Dion, as it is in all the editions of Montaigne, as well as Mr. Cotton's translation.

Bion, lib. iv. sect. 46.

† Diogenes Laertius, in the life of



cedency to any man who affected it. Besides this profit I reap from writing of myself, I have also hoped for this other advantage, that if it fall out that my humour please, or jump with that of some honest man, before I die, he would then desire, and seek to be acquainted with me. I have given him a great deal of space; for all that he could have in many years acquired by a long acquaintance and familiarity, he has seen in three days in this register, and more surely and exactly set down. A pleasant fancy: many things that I would not confess to any one in particular, I deliver to the public; and refer my best friends to a bookseller's shop, to know what are my most secret attainments and thoughts.

*Excultienda damus præcordia\*.*

Fain would the muse lay open to thy test,  
Each latent thought, each winding of my breast.

Had I by such plain tokens known where to have sought for any one proper for my conversation, I would certainly have gone a great way to find him: For the sweetness of suitable and agreeable company; cannot, in my opinion, be bought too dear. Oh! What a rare thing is a friend! How true is that old saying, "that the use of a friend is more pleasing and necessary than the elements of water and fire!" To return to my subject; there is then no great harm in dying privately, and far from home. And we think it a duty to retire for natural actions not so disagreeable nor terrible as this. But besides such as are reduced to spin out a long languishing life, ought not perhaps to wish to encumber a great family with their continual miseries. Therefore the Indians, in a certain province, thought it just to dispatch a man, when reduced to such a necessity: and in another of their provinces they

How useful  
and necessary  
a friend is.

\* Pers. sat. v. ver. 22.



all forsook him, to shift for himself as well as he could. To whom do they not at least become irksome, tedious, and insupportable? You teach your best friends to be cruel in spite of them; hardening women and children by long usage, neither to lament, nor to regard your sufferings. The groans extorted from me by the stone, are not now regarded by any-body. And though we should extract some pleasure from their conversation, (which does not always happen, by reason of the disparity of conditions, which easily begets contempt or envy toward any one whatever) is it not too much to be troublesome all the days of a man's life? The more I should see them strain out of real affection to be serviceable to me, the more I should be sorry for their pains. We are allowed to lean, but not to lay our whole weight upon others, so as to prop ourselves by their ruin. Like him who caused little children's throats to be cut, to make use of their blood for the cure of a certain disease he had: or that other, who was continually supplied with tender young girls, to keep his old limbs warm in the night, and to mix the sweetness of theirs with his sour and stinking breath. Decrepit old age is a solitary quality. I am sociable even to excess; yet I think it reasonable that I should now withdraw my ailments from the sight of the world, and keep them to myself. Let me shrink and draw up myself like a tortoise. I learn to visit men without hanging upon them; I would endanger them in so steep a passage. It is now time to turn my back to company.

Montaigne's  
preparations  
with a view  
to death.

But in these travels you may be surprised with sickness in some wretched cot or hovel, where nothing can be had to relieve you: I always carry most things necessary with me; and besides, we cannot evade fortune, or escape fate, if it once resolve to attack us. I need nothing extraordinary when I am sick. I will not be beholden to my bolus to do that for me which nature cannot. At the very beginning of my fevers, and sicknesses that cast me down, whilst I am yet entire, and but little disordered



ordered in my health, I reconcile myself to God by the last christian offices, and find myself by so doing more free and easy, and have got methinks so much the better of my disease. I have still less need of a scrivener or counsellor, than of a physician. What I have not settled of my affairs when I was in health, let no one expect I will do when I am sick. Death is what I am ever prepared for. I durst not so much as defer it one day. And if nothing be done, it is as much as to say, either that doubt delayed my choice, (and sometimes it is well chosen not to choose) or that I was positively resolved not to do any thing at all. I write my book for few men, and for few years. Had it been a matter of duration, it should have been put into a more durable language; for according to the continual variation that ours has to this day been subject to, who can expect that the present style should be in use fifty years hence? It slips every day through our fingers, and since I was born is altered one half. We say that it is now perfect; and every age says the same of the language then spoken: but I shall hardly trust to that, so long as it varies and changes as it does\*. It is for good and useful writings to rivet it to them, and its reputation will rise or fall with the fortune of our state. For which reason, I am not afraid to insert in it several private articles, which will spend their use amongst the men that are now living, and that concern the particular knowledge of some who will see further into them than every common reader. I will not after all, as I oft hear dead men's memories worried, that men should say of me, "he judged and lived so and so; he would have done

\* There are in Montaigne so many solid thoughts, and so agreeably expressed, paintings so just, lively, and natural, that his book will be read and regarded as long as the French language shall last, how different soever be the turn of it from what it had in his time; which, though it be already so different, the *Essays* have lost nothing of their former credit with men of a good taste, who love study, and to make an advantage of the discoveries to which they are naturally led by such study. This will be an inexhaustible source, from which they will always draw with pleasure.



“ this or that, could he have spoken when he was dying,  
 “ he would have said so or so, and have given this thing  
 “ or the other : I knew him better than any.” Now, as  
 much as decency permits, I here discover my inclinations  
 and affections ; but I do it more willingly and freely by  
 word of mouth, to any one who desires to be informed.  
 So it is, that in these memoirs, if any observe, he will  
 find, that I have either told, or designed to tell all. What  
 I cannot express, I point out with my finger.

*Verum animo satis hæc vestigia parva sagaci  
 Sunt, per quæ possis cognoscere cætera tute \*.*

But by these foot-steps a sagacious mind  
 May certainly all other matters find.

I leave nothing to be desired, or to be guessed at concerning me. If people must be talking of me, I would have it to be justly and truly. I would come again with all my heart from the other world, to give any one the lye that should report me other than I was, though he did it to honour me. I perceive that people represent, even living men, quite another thing than what they really are : and had I not stoutly defended a friend, whom I have lost, they would have represented him to me in a thousand contrary shapes.

What kind of  
 Death relished  
 best.

To conclude the account of my frail  
 humours, I do confess, that in my travel,  
 I seldom come to my quarters, but it runs  
 in my mind whether I could like to be sick, and die there ;  
 I wish to be lodged in some private part of the house,  
 remote from all noise, and nastiness, not smoaky, nor  
 close. I aim to sooth death by these frivolous circum-  
 stances ; or to say better, to discharge myself from all  
 other incumbrances, that I may have nothing to do, but  
 to wait for an event which will be enough to weigh me

\* Lucret. lib. i. ver. 403.



down without any other load. I would have my death share with my life in ease and convenience; it is a great lump of it, and of importance, and hope it will not now contradict what is past. Death has some forms that are more easy than others, and assumes divers qualities, according to every one's fancy. Amongst the natural deaths, those that proceed from weakness and a stupor, I think the most favourable: amongst those that are violent, I dread a precipice worse than the fall of ruins, that would crush me in a moment; and think worse to be killed by a sword than to be shot: I would rather have chosen to poison myself with Socrates, than stab myself with Cato. And though it be the same thing, yet my imagination makes as wide a difference as betwixt death and life, to throw myself into a fiery furnace, or plunge into the channel of a smooth river: so idly does our fear more concern itself for the means than the effect. It is but a moment, it is true, but a moment of such weight, that I would willingly give many days of my life to shoot the gulf after my own way. Since every one's imagination renders it more or less terrible, and since every one has some choice amongst the several forms of dying, let us try a little further, to find some one that is wholly clear from all irksomeness. Might not one render it even pleasant, as they did \* who were companions in death with Anthony and Cleopatra? I set aside the severe and exemplary efforts produced by philosophy and religion. But amongst men of low rank, such as a Petronius †, and a Tigillinus at Rome †, there have been found men condemned to dispatch themselves, who have as it were lulled death asleep with the delicacy of their preparations; they have made it slip and steal away, even in the height of their accustomed diversions, amongst whores and good fellows. There is not a word of consolation, no mention of making a will, no ambitious affectation of constancy, no talk of their future state, amongst sports, feasts, wit,

\* Plutarch, in the life of Mark Anthony, chap. 15.  
 anal. lib. xvi. cap. 19.

† Tacit. Hist. lib. i. cap. 71.

† Tacit. An-



and mirth, table-talk, music, and amorous verses. Is it not possible for us to imitate this resolution after a more decent manner? Since there are deaths that are fit for fools, and fit for the wise, let us find out such as are fit for those who are betwixt both. My imagination suggests to me one that is easy, and since we must die, one that is also to be desired. The Roman tyrants thought

The manner of dying left to the choice of criminals by the tyrants.

they did in a manner give a criminal life, when they gave him the choice of his death. But was not Theophrastus, that philosopher, so delicate, so modest, and so wise, compelled by reason, when he durst repeat this verse translated by Cicero?

*Vitam regit fortuna, non sapientia †.*

Fortune, not wisdom, governs human life.

Fortune is assisting to the facility of the progress of my life; having placed it in such a condition, that for the future it can be no advantage nor hindrance to me. It is a condition that I would have accepted at any stage of my life: but now that I am packing up my baggage, and marching off, I am particularly pleased, that in dying I shall neither have them merry, nor sorry; she has so ordered it by a cunning compensation, that they who may pretend to any considerable advantage by my death, will at the same time sustain a material inconvenience. Death sometimes is more grievous to us, in that it is grievous to others, and interests us in their interest as much as in our own, and sometimes more.

His method of travelling.

In this conveniency of quarters which I desire, I am for nothing pompous and sumptuous, I hate it rather; but am for a certain plain neatness, which is often found in places where there is less of art, and which nature has adorned with some grace that is altogether her own. *Non ampliter, sed munditer convivium; plus salis quam sumptus\**: "I

† Cic. Tusc. lib. v. cap. 9.  
Attic. cap. 13.

\* Corn. Nepos, in vita Pompon.



“I love a feast that is elegant rather than abundant, in which there is more favour than superfluity.” As for those whose affairs compel them to travel in the winter-season through the Grisons country, they must expect to be reduced to extremity upon the road. I, who for the most part travel for my pleasure, do not order my affairs so ill. If the way be foul on my right-hand, I turn on my left; if I find myself unfit to ride, I stay where I am: and really when I do so, I see nothing that is not as pleasant and commodious as my own house. It is true, that I always think superfluity superfluous, and observe a kind of trouble even in delicacy and abundance. Have I left any thing behind me unseen, I go back to see it; I am never out of my way. I trace no certain line, either straight or crooked. If I do not find in the place to which I go what was reported to me, as it oft falls out that the judgments of others do not jump with mine, and that I have found them for the most part wrong; I never complain of losing my labour: I have at least informed myself that what they told me was not there. I have a constitution of body as free, and a palate as indifferent as any man living.

The different fashions of several nations no further concern me than the mere pleasure of variety: Every usage has its reason. Be the plate and dishes pewter, wood, or earth, my meat boiled or roasted, let them give me butter or oil, nuts, or olives, hot, or cold, it is all one to me: and it is so indifferent, that growing old, I accuse this generous faculty, and have need that delicacy and choice should correct the indiscretion of my appetite, and sometimes relieve my stomach. When I have been abroad out of France, and the people in civility have asked me, if I would be served after the French manner, I laughed at the question, and always frequented tables the most filled with strangers. I am ashamed to see my countrymen besotted with this foolish humour of quarrelling with

forms

He accommodated himself to the different manners and customs of the several countries he saw.



forms contrary to their own. They seem to be out of their element, when out of their own village. Wherever they go, they keep strictly to their own fashions, and abominate those of foreigners. If they meet with one of their own country in Hungary; they hail the happy day. They renew their acquaintance; they cling together, and rail at the barbarous manners they see there. And why not barbarous, since they are not French? And those are reckoned to have made the best use of their travels, who rail most at what they have seen; and indeed most of them return no wiser than they went. In their travels very close and reserved, with a silent and incommunicable prudence, preserving themselves from the contagion of an unknown air. What I am saying of them, puts me in mind of something like it, which I have sometimes observed in some of our young courtiers, who will not mix with any but those of their own class; and look upon us as men of another world, with disdain or pity. Put them upon any discourse but the intrigues of the court, and they are utterly at a loss; as very blockheads and novices to us, as we are to them. And it is truly said, that a well-bred man is of a compound education. I, on the contrary, travel very much sated with our own fashions; not to look for Gascons in Sicily, I have left enough of them at home: I rather seek for Greeks and Persians; they are the men I want to be acquainted with, and the men I study; it is with them that I bestow and employ myself: and, which is more, I fancy that I have met but with few customs that are not as good as our own. I have not, I confess, travelled very far; scarce out of the sight of the fanes of my own house!

He seldom joined company upon the road.

As to the rest, most of the accidental company a man falls into upon the road, give him more trouble than pleasure; I wave them as much as I civilly can, especially now that age seems in some sort to privilege and sequester me from the common forms. You suffer for others, or others suffer for you; both of them inconveniencies of  
im.



importance enough, but the latter appears to me the greater.

It is a rare fortune but of inestimable place, to have a worthy man, one of a sound judgment, and of a temper conformable to your own, who takes a delight to bear you company. I have been at a very great loss for one in all my travels. But such a companion should be chosen, and taken with you from your first setting out. There can be no pleasure to me without communication: there is not so much as a spritely thought comes into my mind, which it does not grieve me to have produced alone, without one to communicate it to. *Si cum hac exceptione detur sapientia, ut illam inclusam teneam, nec annunciem, rejiciam*\*; “if wisdom were conferred with this condition, that I must keep it to myself, and not communicate it to others, I would refuse it.” This other has strained it one note higher: *Si contigerit ea vita sapienti, ut omnium rerum affluentibus copiis, quamvis omnia, quæ cognitione digna sunt, summo otio secum ipse consideret, & contempletur, tamen si solitudo tanta sit, ut hominem videre non possit, excedat è vita*†: “if such a condition of life should happen to a wise man, that in the greatest plenty of all conveniencies, he might at the most undisturbed leisure, consider, and contemplate all things worth the knowing, yet if his solitude must be such that he must not see a man, he had much better quit life‡.” I approve of Architas’s opinion, when he said, that it would be unpleasant, even in heaven itself, to survey the glory of those great and divine celestial bodies without a companion. But yet it is much better to be alone, than in foolish and troublesome company. Aristippus loved to live as a stranger in all places:

Worthy men a great relief in travel.

*Mea si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam  
Auspiciis* §.

\* Seneca, epist. 6.

† Cicero de Offic. lib. i. cap. 43.

‡ Cicero de Amicitia, cap. 23.

§ Æneid. lib. iv. ver. 340.

But



But if the fates would so propitious be,  
To let me live at my own liberty;

I should chuse to pass away the greatest part of my life  
on horseback;

——— *visere gestiens,*  
*Qua parte debacchentur ignes*  
*Qua nebulae pluviique rores \*.*

To view the stores of snow and hail,  
And where excessive heats prevail.

Arguments for  
diverting Mon-  
taigne's passion  
for travel.

“ But it may be asked, have you not  
“ more easy diversions at home? What  
“ do you there want? Is not your house  
“ situated in a sweet and healthful air,  
“ sufficiently furnished, and more than sufficiently large?  
“ The royal majesty has more than once been enter-  
“ tained there with all his pomp. Are there not more  
“ below your family in good government, than there  
“ are above it in eminence? Is there any local thought  
“ which is extraordinary, and indigestible, that afflicts  
“ you?

*Quæ te nunc coquat, et vexet sub pectora fixa †?*

That now lies broiling in thy troubl'd breast,  
And ne'er will suffer thee to be at rest?

“ Where do you think to live without molestation and  
“ disturbance? *Nunquam simpliciter fortuna indulget ‡.*  
“ The favours of fortune are always mixed with some  
“ gall.” “ You see then, it is only you that trouble

\* Horat. lib. iii. ode iii. ver. 54, &c.  
‡ Curtius lib. iv. cap. 14.

† Cic. de Senect. ex Enn.

“ yourself,



“ yourself, and that you every where follow yourself,  
 “ and every where complain; for there is no satisfaction  
 “ here below, but for souls that are either brutish or di-  
 “ vine. He, who in so just an occasion has no content-  
 “ ment, where will he think to find it? How many  
 “ millions of men would be content to be in such a con-  
 “ dition as yours? Do but reform yourself; for that is  
 “ wholly in your own power; whereas you have no other  
 “ right, but patience towards fortune. *Nulla placida*  
 “ *quies est, nisi quam ratio composuit* †;” “ there is no  
 “ perfect tranquility but what is produced by reason.”

I see the reason of this remonstrance,  
 and I see it perfectly well; but it would  
 have been more laconic, and more per-  
 tinent, to bid me in one word, be wise. This resolu-  
 tion is beyond wisdom, it is her work and product.  
 Thus the physician lies preaching to a poor languishing  
 patient to be chearful, but he would advise him a little  
 more discreetly in bidding him be well. For my part, I  
 am but a man of the common sort. It is a wholesome  
 precept, certain, and easy to be understood, “ be con-  
 “ tent with what you have,” that is to say, with reason:  
 and yet to follow this advice, is no more in the power  
 of the wisest men than in mine. It is a common saying,  
 but of a terrible extent: what does it not comprehend?  
 All things fall under discretion and qualification. I  
 know very well, that in the literal sense, this pleasure of  
 travelling is a testimony of uneasiness and irresolution;  
 therefore these two are our governing and predominant  
 qualities. Yes, I confess they are; I see nothing, not  
 so much as in a dream, and in a wish, whereon I could  
 set up my rest: variety only, and the possession of di-  
 versity, can satisfy me, if any thing can. In travelling,  
 it pleases me that I may stay where I like without in-  
 convenience, and that I have wherewith commodiously  
 to divert myself. I love a private life, because it is my  
 own choice that I love it, not from any dislike of the

The answer to  
 those arguments.

† Seneca, epist. 56.



public way of living, which perhaps is as much according to my complexion. I serve my prince by it more chearfully, because it is by the free reflection of my own judgment and reason, without any particular obligation; and that I am not compelled so to do, for being rejected or disliked by the other party; and so of all the rest. I hate the morsels that necessity carves for me. I should think that any convenience upon which I were only to depend, would stick in my throat:

*Alter remus aquas, alter mihi radat arenas \**

Let me in water plunge one oar,  
And with the other rake the shore.

One cord will never hold me fast enough. You will say there is a vanity in such an amusement. But where is there not? And these fine precepts are vanity, and all wisdom is vanity. *Dominus novit cogitationes sapientium, quoniam vanæ sunt*; “the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain †.” These exquisite subtilities are only fit for the pulpit. They are discourses that will send us all saddled into the other world. Life is a material and corporeal motion, an action imperfect and irregular of its own proper essence; I make it my business to serve it according as it is.

*Quisquis suos patimur manes ‡*

We all are punish'd for our proper crimes.

*Sic est faciendum, ut contra naturam universam nihil contendamus; ea tamen conservata, propriam sequamur §*:  
“we must so order it, as by no means to contend

\* Prop. lib. iii. eleg. 3. ver. 23.

† 1 Cor. iii. ver. 20.

‡ Offic. lib. i. cap. 31:

† Psalm xciv. ver 11. † Co-

‡ Æneid. vi. ver. 743.

§ Cicero de

“ against



“against universal nature; but yet, that rule being observed, to conform to our own.” To what end are these sublime points of philosophy, upon which no human being can settle, and those rules that exceed both our use and force.

I often see that we have ideas of life set before us, which neither the proposer, nor those that hear him, have any manner of hope, nor which is more, of inclination, to follow. Of the same sheet of paper whereon the judge has but just writ a sentence against an adulterer, he steals a piece whereon to write a love-letter to his companion's wife. She with whom you had but just now an illicit commerce, will presently, even in your own hearing, exclaim more loudly against the same fault in her companion, than a Portia. And such there are, who will condemn men to death for crimes that they do not themselves repute so much as faults. I have in my youth seen a gentleman with one hand present the people with verses that excelled both in wit and licentiousness, and with the other, at the same time, the most rigid theological tenets that the world has been teased with these many years. Men proceed at this rate; we let the laws and precepts take their course, ourselves keep another; not only by debauchery of manners, but often by judgment and contrary opinion. Do but hear a philosophical lecture; the invention, eloquence, and pertinency immediately strike your mind, and move you; there is nothing that either pricks or stings your conscience; it is not to it that they address. Is not this true? This made Aristotle say, that neither a bath nor a lecture signified any thing, unless they scowred and made men clean\*. One may stop at the outward skin; but it is after the marrow is picked out: as after having quaffed off the good liquor in a fine bowl, we consider the graving and workmanship. In all the schools of ancient philosophy, this is

Philosophical remonstrances as much despised by the author of them as by the person to whom they are made.

\* Plutarch, in his Treatise of Hearing, chap. 8.



to be found, that the same philosophy-reader there publishes the rules of temperance, and at the same time reads lectures of love and wantonness. Xenophon, even in the bosom of Clinias, writ against the Aristippic virtue. It is not that there is any miraculous conversion in it that makes them thus wavering, but it is as Solon represents himself, sometimes in his own person, and sometimes in that of a legislator. One while he speaks for the crowd, and another for himself: taking the free and natural rules for his own share, assuring himself of entire health and vigour.

*Curentur dubii medicis majoribus ægri\*.*

A desp'rate wound must skilful hands employ.

A wise man permitted to love. Antisthenes allowed a wise man to be in love †, and do whatever he thought convenient, without regard to the laws; as being better advised than they, and having a greater knowledge of virtue ‡. His disciple Diogenes said, that men to perturbations were to oppose reason; to fortune, confidence; and to the laws, nature. For tender stomachs, forced and artificial recipes must be prescribed: strong stomachs serve themselves simply with the prescriptions of their own natural appetite. After this manner do our physicians proceed, who eat melons, and drink iced wines, whilst they confine their patients to syrup and panada. I know not, said the courtezan Lais, what they mean by their books, their wisdom, and philosophy, but those men knock as oft at my door as any other. In as much as our licentiousness always carries us beyond what is lawful and allowed, men have often stretched the precepts and rules of life beyond universal reason.

\* Juven. sat. xiii. ver. 124.  
Antisthenes, lib. vi. sect. 11.  
sect. 38.

† Diog. Laert. in the life of Antisthenes, lib. vi.  
‡ Idem, in the life of Diogenes, lib. vi.



*Nemo satis credit tantum delinquere quantum  
Permittas \*.*

The wretched sinner always is in quest  
Of crimes unpractis'd, pleasures unpossess'd.

It is to be wished, that there were more proportion betwixt the command and the obedience, and the mark seems to be unjust to which one cannot attain. There is no man so good, but if he measure all his thoughts and actions by the laws, he will find he has deserved hanging ten times in his life; and at the same time it might be great pity and very unjust to punish and ruin him.

———*Olle, quid ad te  
De cute quid faciat ille vel illa sua † ?*

Ollus, what matters it to thee  
What with their skin does he or she ?

And such a one there may be, as has no way offended the laws; who nevertheless would not deserve the character of a virtuous man, and whom philosophy would justly condemn to be whipt; so unequal and perplexed is this relation. We are so far from being good men, according to the laws of God, that we cannot be so according to our own. Human wisdom could never yet arrive at the duties it had prescribed to itself; and could it arrive thereto, it would prescribe to itself others beyond it, to which it would ever aspire and pretend: so great an enemy to consistency is our human condition. Man enjoins himself to be necessarily in fault. He is not very discreet to cut out his own duty by the measure of any other being than his own. To whom does he prescribe that which he does not expect any one can perform? Is he unjust in not

\* Juven. sat. 14. ver. 233.

† Mart. lib. vii. ep. 9. ver. 1, 2.



doing what is impossible for him to do? The laws, by whose sentence we are not able, condemn us for not being able.

Montaigne is obliged to more exactness than those who so much preach up virtue, in the character he attempts to draw of himself.

At the worst this disagreeable liberty of presenting themselves two several ways, the actions after one manner, and the discourses after another, may be allowed to those who speak of things; but it cannot be allowed to those who speak of themselves, as I do. I must march my pen as I do my feet. The common life ought to have a relation to other lives. The virtue of Cato was vigorous beyond the reason of the age he lived in, and for a man who undertook to govern others; as being devoted to the public service, this might be called justice, if not unjust, at least vain, and out of season. Even my own manners, which differ scarce an inch from those that are current amongst us, yet render me at my age a little rough and unsociable. I know not whether it be without reason that I am disgusted with the company I frequent; but I know very well that it would be without reason, should I complain of its being disgusted with me, seeing I am so with it. The virtue that is assigned to the affairs of the world, is a virtue of many windings, corners, and elbows, to join and adapt itself to human frailty; a virtue mixed and artificial; not strait, clean, constant, nor purely innocent. Our annals to this very day reproach one of our kings for suffering himself simply to be carried away by the conscientious persuasions of his confessor. Affairs of state have bolder precepts.

*exeat aula,  
Qui vult esse pius\*.*

Let him who will be good from court retire.

\* Lucan, lib. viii. ver. 493.

I have



I have formerly tried to employ in the management of public affairs, opinions, and rules of living, as rude, new, unpollished, or unpolluted, as either were born with me, or I was formed to from my education, and wherewith I serve my own turn, if not so commodiously, at least as securely, in my own particular concerns: but I have found a scholastic and novice virtue, foolish and dangerous. He that goes into a crowd, must now go one way, and then another, keep his elbows close, retire, or advance, and quit the direct way, according to what he encounters; and must live not so much according to his own method, as that of others; not according to what he purposes to himself, but according to what is proposed to him, according to the time, according to men, according to occasions. Plato says, that whoever escapes unhurt from the world's handling, escapes by miracle: and he says likewise, that when he appoints his philosopher to be the head of a government, he means not a corrupt one like that of Athens, and much less such a one as this of ours, wherein wisdom itself would be at a loss. A good herb transplanted into a strong soil very contrary to its own nature, much sooner conforms itself to the soil, than it reforms the soil to it. I find, that if I were wholly to form myself to such employments, I must undergo a great deal of change and new modelling. And though I could so far prevail upon myself, (and why might I not with time and diligence work such a feat) I would not do it. By the little trial I have had of public employment, it has been so much disgust to me; I feel by times some temptations toward ambition rising in my soul, but I obstinately oppose them.

He was unfit  
for the management of public  
business.

*At tu, Catulle, obstinatus obdura\*.*

But thou, Catullus, hold out to the last.

\* Catul. epig. 9. ver. 19.



I am seldom called to it; and as seldom offer myself uncalled. Liberty and laziness, the qualities most predominant in me, are qualities diametrically contrary to public employment. We cannot distinguish the faculties of men. They have divisions and limits hard and delicate to choose. To conclude from the discreet conduct of private life, a capacity for the management of public affairs, is to conclude wrong. A man may govern himself well, that cannot govern others so, and compose essays that could not work effects. One man may order a siege well, that cannot marshal a battle, and another may speak well in private, who would not be able to harangue a people, or a prince. Nay, it is perhaps rather a testimony in him who can do the one, that he cannot do the other, than otherwise. I find that elevated souls are not much more proper for low things, than mean souls are for high ones. Could it be imagined that Socrates would have administered occasion of laughter to the Athenians at the expence of his own reputation, for having never been able to sum up the votes of his tribe, to deliver it to the council? Doubtless, the veneration I have for the perfections of this great man, deserves that his fortune should furnish so magnificent an example for the excuse of my principal imperfections. Our sufficiency is cut out into small parcels, mine has no latitude, and is also very contemptible in number. Saturninus \* said, to those who had conferred upon him the command in chief, “ My fellow soldiers you have lost  
“ a good captain, to make him a bad general † of an army.

Virtue which  
is genuine and  
sincere cannot  
be employed in  
the manage-  
ment of a cor-  
rupt state.

Whoever boasts, in so sick a time as this, of employing true and sincere virtue in the world's service, either knows not what it is; opinions growing corrupt with manners, (and in truth to hear them describe it, to hear how most of them boast of their deportment, and to see what rules they lay down;

\* One of the thirty tyrants who rose in the time of the emperor Galian.  
August.

† Trebellii Pollionis triginta tyranni, p. 126. Hist.



Instead of painting virtue, they paint mere vice and injustice altogether, and represent them in this false light in the education of princes); or if he does know it, boasts unjustly, and let him say what he will, does a thousand things of which his own conscience accuses him. I would willingly take Seneca's word, of the experience he made of it upon the like occasion, provided he would deal frankly with me. The most honourable mark of goodness in such a necessity, is for a man freely to confess both his own fault, and those of others; with the power of his virtue to stop his inclination towards evil, unwillingly to follow this bias, to hope better, and to desire better. I perceive that in these dismemberments and divisions wherein we in France are involved, every one strives to defend his cause; even the best of them with dissimulation and lies. He that would write roundly of the true state of the quarrel, would write rashly and viciously. What is the most just party, other than a member of a cankered and worm-eaten body? But of such a body, the member that is least affected, is said to be sound, and with good reason, as our qualities have no title but in comparison. Civil innocence is measured according to times and places. I like to read in Xenophon such a commendation of Agesilaus; being intreated by a neighbouring prince with whom he formerly had war, to permit him to pass through his country, he granted his request, giving him free passage through the Peloponnesus; and not only did not imprison or poison him, when he had him at his mercy, but courteously received him according to the obligation of his promise, without doing him the least injury. To such humours as those, this was an act of no great lustre; elsewhere, and in another age, the frankness and magnanimity of such an action will be in high esteem, our rascally capets \* would have laughed at it, so little

The students of  
Montague  
College in  
Paris.

does

\* These capets are properly the scholars of Montague-College at Paris. In 1489 John Standoncht of Mechlin, a doctor of the Sorbonne, settled a fund



does the Spartan innocence resemble that of France. We are without virtuous men, but they are according to what we repute so. Whoever has his manners established in a regularity above the standard of the age he lives in, let him either wrest and blunt his rules; or, which I would rather advise him to, let him retire, and not meddle with us at all. What would he get by it,

*Egregium sanctumque virum si cerno, bimbri  
Hoc monstrum puero, & miranti jam sub aratro  
Piscibus inventis & fœtæ comparo mulæ\*.*

To me an honest man more monster seems  
Than nature shews ev'n when a woman teems  
A child with two heads; than mule's foaling found,  
Or wond'rous fishes plow'd out from the ground.

A man may regret that times are no better, but not from the present; we may wish for other magistrates but, we must notwithstanding obey those we have; and perhaps it is more laudable to obey the bad than the good. So long as the image of the ancient and received laws of this monarchy shall shine in any corner of the kingdom, there will I pitch my tent. If they unfortunately happen

fund for maintaining in this college 84 scholars, in honour of the apostles, and the 72 disciples of Jesus Christ. These scholars were called so from short cloaks they wore, called Capes. And as they were treated very harshly, both with regard to their table, and to their discipline, they were commonly such low geniuses, that the word Cape was made use of, to signify a scholar of the most contemptible character, a fool, an impertinent. Montaigne by the term of rascally Capets intends the bulk of his contemporaries, who would not have failed to ridicule the frank and generous spirit of Agesilaus. In the same predicament may be placed those Flemish historians, who having accused Charles V. of imprudence in relying on the good faith of Francis when his imperial majesty passed through France in 1540, have thereby signified their opinion, that Francis was very weak in slipping so fair opportunity of making himself master of his most formidable enemy. The whole of this note was furnished me by M. de la Monnoye,

\* Juvén. sat. 13. ver. 64. &c.



to thwart and contradict one another, so as to produce two factions of doubtful and difficult choice, I shall most readily chuse to escape and shun the tempest. In the mean time nature, or the hazards of war may lend me a hand. Betwixt Cæsar and Pompey, I would frankly have declared myself; but amongst the three come after, a man must have been necessary to himself or to have gone along with time; which I think lawful, when times are such.

*refus abis †?*

off thou wand'ring run?

a little wide from my  
of the way, but it is  
tonness than heedless-  
ollow one another, but  
at distance; and look  
er, but it is with an

I have read a dialogue of Plato, of a  
tic composition, beginning with the  
d ending with that of rhetoric. They  
variations, and with a marvellous grace  
carried away at the pleasure of the  
seem as if they were. The titles of  
not always comprehend the subject,  
note it by some mark only, as those  
Junuchus, or these, Sylla, Cicero, Tor-  
he poetic ramble, by leaps and skips;  
lato says, light, nimble, and a little  
are pieces in Plutarch, where he for-  
where the proposition of his argument  
y incidence; and stufed throughout with  
Do but observe his progress in the  
tes. Good God, how beautiful then  
and frolicksome fallies, and then most

The reason why  
Montaigne  
sometimes de-  
viated from his  
subject as he  
does here.

THE RULES ON THE OTHER SIDE SHOULD BE NOTED CAREFULLY.

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of all, when they seem to be fortuitous, and introduced for want of heed. It is the unattentive reader that loses my subject, and not I; there will always be found some phrase or other in a corner that is to the purpose, though it lie very close. I ramble indiscreetly and tumultuously, my style and my wit wander at the same rate; a little folly is tolerable in him that will not be guilty of too much, say the precepts, and much more the examples of our masters. A thousand poets flag and creep in the prosaic style, but the best old prose, (and I strow it here up and down indifferently for verse) shines throughout, and has the lustre, vigour, and boldness of poetry, not without some air of its frenzy; and certainly prose ought to have the preheminance in speaking. The poet, says Plato, when set upon the Muse's tripod, pours out with fury whatever comes into his mouth, like the spout of a fountain, without considering and pausing upon it; and things come from him of various colours, of a contrary substance, and with an uninterrupted torrent: and all the old theology, (as the learned inform us) as well as the first philosophy, are poetry. It is the original language of the gods; I mean, that the matter should distinguish itself; it sufficiently shews where it changes, where it concludes, where it begins, and where it rejoins, without interlacing it with words of connexion, introduced for the service of dull or inattentive ears, and without commenting on myself. Who is there that had not rather not be read at all, than after a drowsy or cursory manner? *Nihil est tam utile, quod in transitu proficit* †; "no work can be profitable, when it is read cursorily." If to take a book in hand, were to learn it; if to look upon it, were to consider it; and to run it slightly over, were to make it a man's own; I were then to blame to make myself altogether so ignorant as I say I am. Seeing I cannot fix the attention of my reader by the weight of what I write, *manco male*, "I am much mistaken," if I should chance to do it by perplex-

† Seneca epist. 2.



ing him; nay, he will afterward repent that he ever amused himself with it: it is very true, but he will yet amuse himself with it. Besides, there are some humours in which intelligence produces disdain: who will think better of me for their not understanding what I say, and will conclude the depth of my sense by its obscurity; which to speak sincerely, I mortally hate, and would avoid, if I knew how. Aristotle boasts somewhere in his writings, that he affected it; vicious affectation. The frequent breaks in chapters that I chose to make in the beginning of my book, I have since thought, broke and dissolved the attention before it was raised, as making it disdain to settle and recollect itself to so little; and upon that account I have made the rest longer, such as require propositions, and assigned leisure. In such an employment, to whom you will not give an hour, you give nothing; and do nothing for him, for whom you only do whilst you are doing something else. To which may be added, that I have perhaps some particular obligation to speak only by halves, confusedly and inconsistently. I am therefore displeased with this impertinent way of talking, these extravagant projects that trouble life, and those opinions so refined, that though they have truth, I think it too dear bought, and too disagreeable. On the contrary, I make it my business to bring vanity itself in repute, and folly too, if it bring me any pleasure; and chuse to follow my own natural inclinations, without bearing too strict a hand upon them.

I have seen elsewhere palaces in rubbish, and statues both of gods and men defaced, and yet there are men still; all this is true, and yet for all that, I cannot so often review the ruins of that so great and powerful city, that I do not admire and reverence it.

His particular liking to the city of Rome.

Meaning Rome.

The care of the dead is recommended to us; besides I have been bred up from my infancy with these people: I had knowledge of the affairs of Rome long before I knew those of my own house. I knew the Capitol, and its platform, before I knew the Louvre; and the river Tiber,



Tiber, before the river Seine. The qualities and fortunes of Lucullus, Metellus, and Scipio, have ever run more in my head than those of any of my own countrymen. They are all dead, and so is my father as absolutely dead as they, and is removed as far from me and life in eighteen years, as they are in sixteen hundred; whose memory, friendship, and society, I nevertheless

Gratitude to-  
wards the dead.

cherish and embrace with a perfect and lively union. Nay, my humour is to render myself more officious to the dead; they no longer help themselves, and therefore methinks the more require my assistance; it is there that gratitude appears in its true lustre. Benefits are not so generously placed where there is retrogradation and reflection. Arcefilaus \* going to visit Ctesibius who was sick, and finding him in a very poor condition, privately conveyed some money under his pillow; and, by concealing it from him, acquitted him moreover from the acknowledgment due to such a benefit. Such as have merited from me my friendship and gratitude, have never lost them by being no more; I have better and more carefully paid them, when they were gone, and ignorant of what I did. I speak most affectionately of my friends when it is no longer in their power to know it. I have had a hundred quarrels in defending of Pompey, and for the cause of Brutus. This acquaintance yet continues betwixt us. We have no other hold even of things present but by fancy. Finding myself of no use to this age, I throw myself back upon that other; and am so enamoured of it, that the free, just, and flourishing state of that ancient Rome (for I neither like it in its birth, nor in its old age) engrosses my affection to a degree of enthusiasm, and therefore I cannot so oft review the situation of their streets and houses, and those ruins as profound as the Antipodes, but they always amaze me. Is it by nature, or through error of fancy, that the sight of places which we know have been frequented and inhabited by persons whose memories are

\* Diogenes Laert. in the life of Arcefilaus, lib. iv. § 37.



recommended in story, does in some sort, work more upon us than to hear a recital of their actions, or to read their writings? *Tanta vis admonitionis inest in locis; et id quidem in hac urbe infinitum: quacumque enim ingredimur, in aliquam historiam vestigium ponimus* \*: “so great a power of admonition is there in places; and truly in this city so infinite, that which way soever we go we tread upon some history.” It pleases me to consider their face, port, and vestments. I still ruminate on those great names, and make them ring in my ears. *Ego illos veneror, & tantis nominibus semper assurgo* †; “I reverence them, and rise up in honour of names so great.” Of things that are in any measure great and admirable, I admire even the common parts. I could wish to see them talk, walk, and sup. It were ingratitude to contemn the relics and images of so many worthy and valiant men as I have seen live and die, and who, by their example give us so many good instructions, if we knew how to follow them.

Besides, this very Rome that we now see deserves to be beloved; so long, and by so many titles a confederate with our crown; the only common and universal city. The sovereign magistrate that commands there, is equally acknowledged elsewhere: it is the metropolitan city of all the Christian nations. The Spanish and French are there at home. To be a prince of this estate, there needs no more but to be a prince of Christendom. There is no place upon earth, that heaven has embraced with such an influence and constancy of favour; its very ruins are glorious, and stately,

Rome the common and universal metropolis of the nations.

*Laudandis preciosior ruinis* ‡.

More glorious by her wond'rous ruins.

\* Cic. de Fin. lib. v. cap. 2.

† Seneca, epist. 64.

‡ Sido-

nius, Apol. carm. 27. entitled Narbo ad Consentium, ver. 62.



She yet in her very ruins retains the marks and image of empire. *Ut palam sit uno in loco gaudentis opus esse nature*; "so that it is manifest that nature is in this one place enamoured of her own work." Some would blame, and be angry at themselves for being tickled with so vain a pleasure. Our humours are never too vain that are pleasant. Whatever they are that always content a man of common understanding, I could not have the heart to accuse him.

In what sense  
Montaigne is  
obliged to for-  
tune.

I am very much obliged to Fortune, in that to this very hour she has offered me no outrage beyond what I was able to bear. Is it not her way to let those live in quiet by whom she is not importuned?

*Quanto quisque sibi plura negaverit,  
A diis plura feret: nihil cupientium  
Nudus castra peto: multa petentibus  
Desunt multa\*.*

The more we to ourselves deny,  
The more the bounteous gods supply,  
The more indulgent heav'n bestows;  
Far from the quarters of the great  
Happy, tho' naked, I retreat  
Who covet much, their want is great. }

If she continue her favour, she will dismiss me very well satisfied.

—— *nihil supra  
Deos laceſſo†.*

Nor for more  
Do I the gods implore.

\* Hor. lib. iii. ode 16. ver. 21.

† Hor. lib. ii. ode 18. ver. 11, 12.



But beware a shock. There are a thousand that perish in the port. I am very easy as to what shall here happen when I shall be gone. Present things take up enough of my thoughts.

*Fortunæ cætera mando.*

I leave the rest to Fortune.

Besides, I have not that strong obligation, that which is said to attach men to futurity by the issue that succeeds to their name and honour; and perhaps I ought the less to covet them, if they are to be so much desired. I am of myself but too much tied to the world, and to this life. I am content to be in Fortune's power by circumstances properly necessary to my being, without otherwise extending her jurisdiction over me; and never thought, that to be without children was a defect that ought to render life less contented. The want of issue has its conveniences too. Children are of the number of things that are not very much to be desired, especially now, when it would be so hard to make them good. *Bona jam nec nasci licet, ita corrupta sunt semina*\*; "nor can any thing good spring from seed so corrupt." And yet they are justly to be lamented by such as have lost them.

He did not think himself a whit the more unhappy for having no children to bear his name.

Children not much to be coveted, and why.

He who left me my house in charge prognosticated that I would ruin it, considering my rambling humour: but he was mistaken, for I am in the same condition now as when I first entered into it, or rather better; and yet without office, or any place of profit.

His household affairs not the worse for being in his hands.

\* Tertul. de pudicit.



He received no substantial favours from Fortune but such only as were windy and titular.

As to the rest, if Fortune has never done me any violent or extraordinary injury, neither has she favoured me. Whatever our family derives from her bounty, was there above an hundred yeats before my time. I have, as to my own particular, no essential and solid good, that I stand indebted for to her liberality; she has indeed done me some airy honours, and titular favours that are not substantial; and those in truth she has not granted, but offered me, who, God knows, am all material, and like nothing but what is real and solid. And who, if I durst confess so much, would not think avarice much less excusable than ambition; nor pain less to be avoided than shame; nor health less to be coveted than learning, or riches than nobility.

Amongst her empty favours there is none that so much pleases the silly humour natural to my country, as an authentic bull of a Roman burges, that was granted me when I was last there, embellished with pompous seals and gilt letters; and granted in the most bountiful manner. And because it is couched in a mixt style, more or less favourable, and that I could have been glad to have seen the copy of it before it had passed the seal, I will, to satisfy any one that may be sick of the same curiosity I was, transcribe it here in its true form.

A bull investing Montaigne with the freedom of the city of Rome.

*Quod Horatius Maximus, Martius Cecius, Alexander Mutus, | almæ urbis conservatores, de illustrissimo viro, Michaelæ Montano, equite Sancti Michaelis, & à cubiculo Regis Christianissimi Romana civitate donando, ad Senatum retulerunt, S. P. Q. R. de ea re ita fieri censuit.*

*CUM veteri more & instituto cupide illi semper studioseque suscepti sint, qui virtute ac nobilitate præstantes, magno reip. nostræ usui atque ornamento fuissent, vel esse aliquando possent: nos majorum nostrorum exemplo, atque auctoritate per-*



*permoti, præclaram hanc consuetudinem nobis imitandam, ac servandam fore censemus. Quamobrem cum illustrissimus Michael Montanus eques Sancti Michaelis, & à cubiculo Regis Christianissimi, Romani nominis studiosissimus, & familie laude, atque splendore, & propriis virtutum meritis dignissimus sit, qui summo senatus populi que Romani judicio ac studio in Romanam civitatem adsciscatur; placere senatui P. Q. R. illustrissimum Michaelem Montanum rebus omnibus ornatissimum, atque huic inclyto populo charissimum, ipsum posterosque in Romanam civitatem adscribi, ornarique omnibus & præmiis & honoribus, quibus illi fruuntur, qui cives patritii que Romani nati, aut jure optimo facti sunt. In quo censere senatum P. Q. R. se non tam illi jus civitatis largiri, quam debitum tribuere, neque magis beneficium dare quam ab ipso accipere, qui hoc civitatis munere accipiendo, singulari civitatem ipsam ornamento, atque honore affecerit. Quam quidem S. C. auctoritatem iidem conservatores per senatus P. Q. R. scribas in acta referri atque in Capitolii curiâ servari, privilegiûmque bujuscmodi fieri, solitoque urbis sigillo communiri curarunt. Anno ab urbe condita CXCXXXI. Post Christum natum MDLXXXI. III. idus Martii.*

*Horatius Fuscus Sacri S. P. Q. R. scriba.*

*Vincent. Martbolus Sacri S. P. Q. R. scriba.*

Being before burgeses of no city at all, I was glad to be created free of the most noble city that ever was, or ever will be. If other men would consider themselves, as attentively as I do, they would, as I do, discover themselves to be full of vanity and foppery; and rid myself of it I cannot, without making myself away. We are all leavened with it, as well one as another; but they who are sensible of it, have the better bargain, and yet I know not whether they have or no.

This opinion, and common custom to observe others more than ourselves, has very much relieved us. It is a very displeasing object: we see nothing in it but misery and vanity. Nature, that we may not be dejected with the sight of our own deformities, has wisely projected

Why man does not love to know and observe himself.

jected



jected our optic organ outward. We go forward with the current, but to turn back towards ourselves is a painful motion; thus is the sea agitated and troubled when the waves are repelled against one another. Observe, says every one, the motion of the heavens; the revolution of public affairs; observe the quarrel of such a person; feel such a one's pulse; mind another's last will and testament; in short, be always looking high or low, or on one side, or before or behind you. It was a paradoxical command anciently given us by the god at Delphos: "Look into yourself, discover yourself, keep close to yourself; call back your mind and will, that elsewhere consume themselves, into yourself; you run out, you waste yourself; collect yourself; support yourself; men betray you, men spoil you, men steal you from yourself." Dost not thou see that this world keeps all its views confined within, and its eyes open to contemplate itself? It is always vanity for thee, both within and without; but it is less vanity when less extended. Excepting thee, (O man) said that god, every thing studies itself first, and has bounds to its labours and desires, according to its need. There is nothing so empty and necessitous as thou who embracest the universe; thou art the explorer without knowledge, the magistrate without jurisdiction; and after all, the fool in the play.

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## C H A P. X.

### *Of managing the Will.*

Montaigne kept his affections in a moderate state.

**F**EW things in comparison of what commonly affect other men, move, or to speak more properly, captivate me: for it is but reason they should concern a man, provided they do not wholly engross him. I am very solicitous, both by study and argument, to enlarge this privilege of sinec-



insensibility, which in me is naturally far advanced, so that I espouse, and am consequently moved with few things. I have a clear sight, but I fix it upon very few objects; have a sense delicate and tender, but an apprehension and application hard and dull; I am very unwilling to engage myself. As much as in me lies, I employ myself wholly for myself; and in this very subject, would rather chuse to curb and restrain my affection from plunging entirely into it, it being a subject that I possess at the mercy of others, and over which fortune has more right than I. Even so far as to health, which I so much value, it were necessary for me, not so passionately to covet and desire it, as to think diseases insupportable. There ought to be a medium betwixt the hatred of pain, and love of pleasure. And Plato prescribes the very thing.

But against such affections as carry me away from myself, and fix me elsewhere, against those, I say, I oppose myself with all my force. It is my opinion, that a man should lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself. Were my will easy to be engaged and swayed, I would not stick there: I am too tender both by nature and habit,

Why he strove  
against those  
which attached  
him to what  
was foreign to  
himself.

—*Fugax rerum, secūraque in otia natus* \*.

I fly from business as from a disease;  
Having been bred in negligence and ease,

for hot and obstinate disputes wherein my adversary would at last have the better; and the issue, which would render my heat of argument disgraceful, would perhaps vex me to the last degree. Should I set myself to it as earnestly as others do, my soul would never be able to

\* Ovid. de Trist. lib. iii. eleg. 2. ver. 91



bear the emotion and alarms, which those feel who grasp so much, and it would immediately be distracted by this inward agitation. If sometimes I have been put upon the management of other men's affairs, I have promised to take them in hand, but not into my lungs and liver; to charge myself with them, not to incorporate them; to take pains, but not to be passionate in them; I have a regard to them, but I will not brood over them: I have enough to do to order and govern the domestic throng that I have in my own veins and bowels, without harbouring and loading myself with a crowd of other men's affairs, and have enough of own proper and natural business to mind, without calling in the concerns of others. Such as know how much they owe to themselves, and how many offices they are bound to of their own, find, that nature has cut them out work enough of their own to keep them from being idle. Thou hast business enough at home, look to that. Men let themselves out to hire; their faculties are not for themselves, but are employed for those to whom they have enslaved themselves; this common humour pleases not me. We must be thrifty of the liberty of our souls, and never let them out but upon just occasions, which if we judge aright, are very few. Do but observe such as have accustomed themselves to be at every one's call and command; they are so upon all, as well little as great, occasions, in what does not concern them, as well as in what does. They intrude themselves indifferently wherever there is business, and are without life, when not in some bustle of affairs. *In negotiis sunt negotii causa*\*; "they only seek business for business sake." It is not so much that they desire to go, as it is that they cannot stand still: like a rowling stone from a hill, that stops not, till it is at the bottom. Business, in a certain sort of men, is a mark of understanding, and dignity. Their minds are not easy but in agitation, as children that must be rocked in a cradle. They may pronounce themselves as serviceable to their friends,

\* Seneca, *epist.* 22.



as troublesome to themselves. No one is lavish of his money to another, but every one is ready to give him his time and his life. There is nothing of which we are so prodigal as of these things, of which to be thrifty, would be both commendable and useful. I am of a quite contrary humour. I look to myself, and commonly covet with no great ardour what I do desire; and desire little: I employ and busy myself likewise but rarely and temperately. Whatever they aim at, and take in hand they do it with their utmost desire and with vehemency. There are so many wrong steps in life, that for the greater safety, we must a little lightly and superficially slide through the world, and not plunge into it over head and ears. Pleasure itself is painful at the bottom.

*— incedis per ignes  
Suppositos cineri doloso \**

Thou upon glowing coals dost tread,  
Under deceitful ashes hid,

The parliament of Bourdeaux chose me mayor of their city, at a time when I was far from France, and much farther from any such thought: I entreated to be excused; but I was told that I was to blame,

Montaigne.  
obliged to serve  
the office of  
mayor of  
Bourdeaux.

the king having also interposed his command in that affair. It is an office that ought to be looked upon the more honourable, as it has no salary nor advantage but the bare honour of its execution: it continues two years, but may be extended by a second election, which very rarely happens; but it did to me, though it never did so but twice before: viz. some years ago to Monsieur de Lausae, and lately to Monsieur de Biron, marshal of France, in whose place I succeeded, and left mine to Monsieur de Matignon, marshal of France also, proud of so noble a fraternity.

• Hor. lib. ii. ode 1. ver. 7.



*Uterque bonus pacis bellique minister* \*.

Both fit for governing in peace and war.

Fortune would have a hand in my promotion, by this particular circumstance which she put in of her own, not altogether vain; for Alexander disdained the ambassadors of Corinth, who offered him the freedom of their city; but when they informed him, that Bacchus and Hercules were also in the register, he thankfully accepted it.

The character  
he gave of him-  
self to the ma-  
gistrates of  
Bordeaux.

At my arrival, I faithfully and conscientiously represented myself to them such as I find myself to be; a man without memory, without vigilance, without experience, and without vigour; but likewise void of hatred, ambition, avarice, and violence; that they might know what they were to expect from my service. And because the knowledge they had of my deceased father, and the honour in which they held his memory, were their only motives to confer this favour upon me, I plainly told them, that I would be very sorry any thing should make so great an impression upon me as their affairs, and the concerns of their city had done upon him, whilst he had the care of them in the same government to which they had preferred me. I very well remember when I was a boy, to have seen him in his old age, cruelly tormented with the toil of the public affairs; forgetting the sweet calm of his own house, to which his age and infirmity had attached him for several years before; regardless of his own affairs, and of his health, and really despising his own life, which was in great danger of being lost by being engaged in long and painful journeys for their service. Such was he, and this humour of his proceeded from great good nature. Never was there a more charitable and public-

\* *Æneid* lib. xi. ver. 658.



spirited soul. Yet this proceeding which I commend in another, I do not love to follow myself, and am not without excuse. He had learnt, that a man must forget himself for his neighbour, and that individuals were of no manner of consideration in comparison with the general concern.

Most of the rules and precepts of this world tend to drive us out of ourselves to go a hunting for the benefit of the society. They thought to do a great feat, to divert and separate us from ourselves, presuming we were but too much attached to ourselves by a too natural inclination, and have left nothing unsaid to that purpose: for it is no new thing for wise men to preach up things as they serve, not as they are. Truth has its obstructions, inconveniences, and incompatibilities with us. We must be often deceived, that we may not deceive ourselves. Our eyes must be shut, and our understandings stupified to recover and amend them. *Imperiti enim judicant, & qui frequenter in hoc ipsum fallendi sunt, ne errent*; “for the ignorant judge, and therefore are oft to be deceived lest they should err.” When they prescribe to us to love three, four, and fifty degrees of things above ourselves, they do like archers, who, to hit the white, take their aim a great deal higher than the butt. To set a crooked stick straight, we bend it the contrary way. I believe that in the temple of Pallas, as we see in all other religions, there were apparent mysteries to be exposed to the people, and others more secret and sublime, that were only to be shown to such as were the professors.

Why the sages recommended it to men to neglect themselves for the sake of the public

It is likely that the true point of friendship, that every one owes to himself is to be found in these things; not a false friendship, that makes us embrace glory, knowledge, riches, and the like, with a principal and immoderate affection, as members of our being; nor an indiscreet

The truly wise man is convinced of the obligation which he owes to others, by knowing what he owes to himself.



and effeminate friendship, which, like ivy, decay<sup>s</sup> and ruins the walls it embraces: but a sound and regular friendship, equally profitable and pleasant. Whoever knows the duties of this friendship, and practises them, is truly of the cabinet-council of the Muses, and has attained to the height of human wisdom, and our happiness. Such a one, exactly knowing what he owes to himself, will on his part find that he ought to apply the use of the world, and of other men to himself, and for this end to contribute the duties and offices appertaining to him to the public society. He who lives not in some sort for others, lives not much for himself. *Qui sibi amicus est, scito hunc amicum omnibus esse*\*; "he who is his own friend, is a friend to all men." The principal charge we have, is, to every one to take care of himself; and it is for this that we here live. As he who would omit to lead a virtuous and holy life, and think he acquitted himself of his duty, by instructing and training others up to it, would be a fool; even so he, who abandons his own healthful and pleasant life to serve others, takes, in my opinion, a course that is wrong, and unnatural.

He that is too eager in the exercise of an office cannot manage it with prudence nor equity.

I would not that men should refuse, in the employments they take upon them, their attention, pains, their eloquence, and if need be, their sweat and blood,

*non ille pro charis amicis*

*Aut patriâ timidus perire †.*

Dares for his country or his friend to die.

But this is by way of loan and accidentally; his mind being always, in repose and in health; not without ac-

\* Sen. epist. 6. at the end.

† Hor. lib. iv. ode 9. ver. 32.



tion, but without vexation, without passion. Merely to act, costs him so little, that he acts even sleeping. But it must be put into brisk motion with discretion; for the body receives the offices imposed upon it, just according to what they are; the mind oft extends, and makes them heavier at its own expence, giving them what measure it pleases. Men perform like things with different efforts, and a different contention of the will; the one does well enough without the other. For, how many people hazard themselves every day in war, without any concern which way it goes, and thrust themselves into the dangers of battles, the loss of which will not break their next night's sleep? And there are men at home, out of such danger, which they durst not have faced, who are more passionately concerned for the issue of this war, and whose soul is more anxious about the events of it than the soldier who spends his life and blood in it. I could have engaged myself in public employments, without quitting myself a hair's breadth, and have given myself to others, without abandoning myself; this eagerness and vehemence of desires more hinders than advances the conduct of what we undertake; fills us with impatience against slow or contrary events, and with bitterness and suspicion against those, with whom we have to do. We never carry on that thing well, by which we are wholly possessed and governed.

*Male cuncta ministras*

*Impetus\*.*

With heated minds we ne'er conduct things well.

He, who therein employs only his judgment and address, proceeds more chearfully: he counterfeits, he gives way, he defers all things at his ease, according to the necessities of occasions; he fails in his attempts without trouble and affliction, ready and entire for a

\* Statius in Thebais, lib. x. ver. 4. & 5.



new enterprize: he always marches with the bridle in his hand. In him who is intoxicated with this violent and tyrannical intention, we necessarily discover much imprudence and injustice. The impetuosity of his desire carries him away. These are rash motions, and, if fortune do not very much assist, of very little fruit.

That the chastisement of offences ought to be performed without anger.

Philosophy requires, that in the punishment of injuries received, we should divest ourselves of choler; not that the revenge should be less, but, on the contrary, that it may be the better applied and the more heavily laid on, which, it is conceived, will be hindered by this impetuosity. For anger not only troubles, but of itself also wearies the arms of those who chastise. This fire benumbs and wastes their strength. As in precipitancy, *festinatio tarda est*; "the more haste, the worse speed." Haste trips up its own heels, fetters and stops itself, *ipse se velocitas implicat* \*. For example: according to what I commonly see, avarice has no greater impediment than itself. The more intense and vigorous it is, the less it rakes together, and commonly sooner gathers riches when disguised under a mask of liberality.

Excellent character of a prince who was superior to the accidents of his fortune.

A very honest gentleman, a friend of mine, had like to have cracked his brains by a too passionate attention to the affairs of a certain prince, his master; which master has thus painted himself to me; that he foresees the weight of accidents as well as another; but that in those for which there is no remedy, he presently resolves upon patience. In others, having taken all the necessary precautions, which by the vivacity of his understanding he can soon do, he calmly waits what may follow. And, in truth, I have accordingly seen him maintain a great indifferency and freedom of actions, and countenance, in very great and perplexed affairs. I find him a greater, and a more able man

\* Seneca, epist. 44: at the end.



in adversity than prosperity. His losses are to him more glorious than his victories, and his mourning than his triumphs.

Do but consider, that even in vain and frivolous actions, as at chess, tennis, and the like, this eager and ardent engaging with an impetuous desire, immediately throws the mind and members into indiscretion and disorder. A man puzzles and bewilders himself. He that carries himself the most moderately both towards gain and loss, has always his wits about him. The less peevish and passionate he is at play, he plays with much more advantage and safety.

It is an advantage in gaming to keep one's temper both in gain and loss.

As to the rest, we hinder the mind's grasp in giving it so many things to seize upon. Some things we are only to offer to it, to tie it to others, and with others to incorporate it. I can feel and discern all things, but ought to feed on nothing but self; and should be instructed in what properly concerns itself, and what is properly of its own possession and substance: the laws of nature teach us what we are justly to have. After the sages have told us, that no one is indigent by nature, and that every one is so according to opinion, they very subtilly distinguish betwixt the desires that proceed from the former, and those that proceed from the irregularity of our fancy. Those, of which we can see the end, are nature's; those that fly before us, and of which we can see no end, are our own. There is an easy cure for the want of goods; but the poverty of the soul is incurable,

A man ought to know his own solid interest.

*Nam si, quod satis est homini, id satis esse potestet,  
Hoc sat erat: nunc, quum hoc non est, qui credimus porro,  
Divitias ullas animum mî explere potesse †?*

† Lucilius, lib. v. apud Nunnium, cap. 5. § 98.



If what's for man enough, enough could be,  
 It were enough ; but as we plainly see  
 That wont suffice ; how can I e'er believe  
 That any wealth my mind content can give ?

Socrates seeing a heap of treasure, jewels, and costly furniture, carried in pomp through the city, "how many things \*," said he, "do I not desire !" Metrodorus lived on the weight of twelve ounces a day ; Epicurus upon less : Metrocles † in winter slept abroad amongst sheep, in summer in the cloisters of churches. *Sufficit ad id natura quod poscit ‡* ; "nature furnishes what it absolutely needs." Cleanthes lived by the labour of his own hands, and boasted, "that Cleanthes, if he he would, could yet maintain another Cleanthes §."

Why his necessities may be extended a little beyond the necessary demands of nature.

If that, which nature exactly and originally requires of us for the preservation of our being, be too little, (as in truth, how much it is, and how cheaply life may be maintained, cannot be better made out, than by this consideration, that it is so little, that by its littleness it escapes the gripe and shock of fortune) let us allow ourselves a little more, let us even call every one of our habits and conditions nature ; let us tax and treat ourselves by this measure, let us stretch our appurtenances and accompts thus far ; for so far I fancy we have some excuse. Custom is a second nature, and no less powerful. What is wanting to my custom, I reckon as wanting to me ; and I would be almost as well content that they took away my life, as retrench me in the way wherein I have so long lived. I am past the terms of any great change, nor able to put myself into a new and unwonted course, though it were to my

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 32.

† Plutarch, in his tract entitled, that Vice alone is sufficient to make a Man unhappy, chap. 4.

‡ Seneca, epist. 18.

§ It was Zeno who said this to Cleanthes, his disciple, if we may believe Diogenes Laertius in the life of Cleanthes, lib. vii. § 169, 170.



advantage; it is past the time for me to become other than what I am. And I would complain of any great good adventure that should now befall me, that it came not in time to be enjoyed;

*Quo mihi fortunas, si non conceditur uti \* ?*

Might I have the world's wealth, I should refuse it;  
What good will't do me, if I may not use it?

so would I complain of my inward acquisition. It were almost better never, than so late, to become honourable; and to know the world thoroughly when a man has no longer to live. I, who am going out of it, would easily resign to any new comer all the prudence I have acquired in the world's commerce. "After meat comes mustard." I have no need of goods, of which I can make no use. Of what use is knowledge to him that has lost his head? it is an injury and unkindness in fortune, to tender us presents that will inspire us with a just resentment that we had them not in their season. Guide me no more, I can no longer go. Of so many parts as make up a sufficiency, patience is the best. Assign the part of an excellent treble to a chorister that has rotten lungs, and eloquence to a hermit exiled into the desarts of Arabia. There is no art necessary for a fall; the end comes of itself, at the conclusion of every affair. My world is at an end, my form expired; it is all over with me; and I am bound to authorise it, and to conform my exit to it. I will here declare, by way of example, that the late ten days diminution of the year by the pope, has taken me so low, that I cannot well reconcile myself to it. I follow the years wherein we kept another kind of account: so ancient, and so long a custom, challenges and calls me back to it; so that I am constrained to be a kind of heretic in that point, impatient of any, though corrective, innovation. My imagination, in spite of my teeth, always pushes me ten days

The abridgment  
of ten days offered  
by the pope.



forward or backward, and is ever murmuring in my ears. This rule concerns those who are to begin to be. If health itself, as sweet as it is, returns to me by intervals, it is rather to give me cause of regret than possession of it; I have no longer the means of recovering it. Time leaves me, without which nothing can be possessed. Oh, what little account should I make of those great elective dignities that I see in the world, which are only conferred upon men who are taking leave of it! Wherein it is not so much regarded how well he will discharge them, as how little a while; from the very entrance they have an eye to the exit. To conclude, I am ready to finish this man, and not to rebuild another. By long custom, this form is, in me, turned into substance, and fortune into nature. I say therefore, that every one of us feeble creatures is excusable in thinking that his own, which is comprized under this measure; but beyond these limits, it is nothing but confusion, it is the largest extent we can grant to our prerogative. The more we amplify our possessions, so much the more do we expose ourselves to the strokes of fortune and adversity. The career of our desires ought to be circumscribed, and restrained to a short limit of near and contiguous conveniencies; and ought moreover to perform their course, not in a right line, that ends elsewhere, but in a circle, of which the two points by a short circumvolution meet and terminate in ourselves. Actions that are carried on without this reflection, a near and essential reflection I mean, such as those of ambitious and avaricious men, and many more, who run from the point, and whose career always carries them before themselves, such actions, I say, are erroneous and crazy.

An honest man  
is not corrupted  
by the employ-  
ment he exer-  
cises.

Most of our business is farce. *Mundus universus exercet histrionem* †. We must play our part duly, but nevertheless as the part of a borrowed person; we must not make real essence out of a vizard

† Petronius Arbiter, lib. iii. cap. 8.



and outward appearance, nor of a strange person our own; we cannot distinguish things that are near from those that are remote; it is enough to meal the face, without mealing the breast. I see some, who transform and transubstantiate themselves into as many new shapes and new beings as they undertake employments, and who, with the pride of Lucifer, carry their office along with them, even to their close-stool: I cannot make them distinguish the salutations made to them, from those that are made to their commission, their train, or their mule. *Tantum se fortunæ permittunt, etiam ut naturam dediscant* \*; “they are so intoxicated with their “fortune, as even to forget their nature.” They swell and puff up their souls, and their natural tone of speaking according to the height of their place. The mayor and Montaigne have ever been two persons, by very manifest separation. To be an advocate or a treasurer, a man must not be ignorant of the knavery of such callings; an honest man is not accountable for the vices or folly of his profession, and yet ought not to refuse to take it upon him: it is the custom of his country, and there is money to be got by it; a man must live by the world, and make his best of it, such as it is. But the judgment of an emperor ought to be upon his empire, and the seeing and considering of it, as of a foreign accident: and he ought to know how to enjoy himself apart from it, and to communicate himself, as James and Peter, to himself at least. I cannot engage myself so deep and entire.

When my will gives me up to a party, it is not with so violent an obligation as to infect my understanding. In the present broils of this kingdom, my interest has not made me forget the qualities of our adversaries that are laudable, nor those

Montaigne, by espousing a party, did not espouse its fury, injustice, and ridiculous whimsies.

that are reproachable in our party. They adore all of their own side; for my part I do not so much as excuse those things in mine: a good piece has never the worse grace for being levelled at me. The knot of the con-



troverſy excepted, I have always kept myſelf in equanimity and pure indifference: *Neque extra neceſſitates belli præcipuum odium gero*; “and have no particular hatred “beyond the neceſſities of war.” For which I am pleaſed with myſelf, and the more, becauſe I ſee common failings on the contrary ſide. Such as extended their anger and hatred beyond the diſpute in queſtion, as moſt men do, ſhew that they ſpring from ſome other motive and particular cauſe; like one, who being cured of an ulcer, has yet a remaining fever, by which it appears that the latter had another ſource more concealed. Thus they are not concerned in the common cauſe, as it is wounding to the intereſt of the ſtate and the public, but are only animated by their private concerns. This is the true reaſon why they are ſo particularly piqued, and to a degree beyond juſtice and public reaſon. *Non tam omnia univerſi, quam ea, quæ ad quemque pertinent, ſinguli carpebant*; “every one was not ſo much angry at things “in general, as at thoſe that particularly concerned “themſelves.” I would have matters go well on our ſide; but if they do not, I ſhall not run mad. I am heartily for the right party; but I do not affect to be taken notice of in particular for an enemy to the others, and beyond the general reaſon. I am a mortal enemy to this vicious form of cenſure: “He is of the league, “becauſe he admires the perſon of the duke of Guiſe. “Another is aſtoniſhed at the king of Navarre’s activity, “and therefore he is a Hugonot. Another finds ſuch “and ſuch faults in the king’s conduct, and therefore he is ſeditious in his heart.” I would not grant to a magiſtrate himſelf, that he did well in condemning a book, becauſe it had ranked a heretic among the beſt poets of the time. Shall we not dare to ſay of a thief, that he has a handsome leg? If a woman be a ſtrumpet, muſt it needs follow that ſhe has a ſtinking breath? Did they in the wiſeſt ages revoke the ſuperb title of Capitoline, which they had before conferred upon Marcus Manlius, as the conſervator of religion and public liberty; did they ſtifle the memory of his liberality, his feats of arms and the military rewards granted to his virtue, becauſe he afterwards aſpired to  
the



the sovereignty, in prejudice of the laws of his country? If they have taken a hatred against an advocate, he will not be allowed the next day to be eloquent. I have elsewhere spoke of the zeal that pushed on worthy men to the like faults. For my part, I can say, such a one does this thing wickedly, and another thing virtuously. In like manner, in the prognostics, or sinister events of affairs, they pronounce every one of his party to be blind, or a blockhead, and require our persuasion and judgment to be subservient, not to truth, but to the project of our wishes. I would rather incline towards the other extreme, so much do I fear being influenced by my desire: to which may be added, that I am a little tenderly distrustful of things that I wish.

I have in my time seen wonders in that indiscreet and prodigious readiness of people in suffering their hopes and belief to be led and governed which way has best pleased and served their leaders, through a hundred mistakes one upon another; and through dreams and phantasms. I no longer wonder at those who have been seduced by the fooleries of Apollonius and Mahomet. Their sense and understanding is absolutely stifled in their passion; their discretion has no more any other choice than that which smiles upon them, and encourages their cause. I had principally observed this in the beginning of our intestine heats; this other, which is sprung up since, by imitating, has surpassed it; by which I am induced to think that it is a quality inseparable from popular errors. After the first that starts, opinions drive on one another like waves with the wind. A man is not a member of the body, if it be in his power to forsake it, and if he do not run with the herd; but certainly they wrong the just side, when they go about to assist it with fraud. I have ever been against that practice. This can only work upon weak heads; as for the sound there are surer, as well as more honest ways to keep up their courage, and to excuse cross accidents.

The indiscreet facility of people in suffering themselves to be imposed upon by the leaders of a party.

Heaven



Difference betwixt Cæsar and Pompey's war and that which was fomented betwixt Marius and Sylla.

Heaven never beheld so great an animosity as that betwixt Cæsar and Pompey, nor ever will; and yet I observe me-thinks in those brave souls a great moderation towards one another. It was a jealousy of honour and command, which did not transport them to a furious and indiscreet hatred; their's was hatred without malignity and detraction. In their hottest exploits, I discover some remains of respect and good-will; and therefore am of opinion, that, had it been possible, each of them would rather have done his business without the ruin of the other, than with it. Take notice how much otherwise matters went with Marius and Sylla?

The danger of a man's being a slave to his affections.

We must not be so desperately driven by our affections and interest. As when I was young, I opposed the progress of love, which I perceived to advance too fast upon me, and took care lest it should at last become so pleasing, as to captivate, and wholly reduce me to its mercy: so I do the same upon all other occasions where my will runs on with too keen an appetite. I lean opposite to the side it inclines to, as I find it going to plunge and make itself drunk with its own wine; I avoid nourishing its pleasure so far, that I cannot recover it without a cruel loss. Souls that, through their own stupidity, only discern things by halves, have this happiness, that they smart least with hurtful things. It is a mental leprosy that has some appearance of health, and such a health as philosophy does not altogether condemn; but yet we have no reason to call it wisdom, as we often do. After this manner one anciently mocked Diogenes, who in the depth of winter, and stark-naked, went to embrace a statue covered with snow for a trial of his patience\*. The other meeting him in this plight, "art thou not very cold?" said he †, "not at all," replied Diogenes. "Why then," said the other, "what

\* Diog. Laert. in the life of Diogenes the Cynic, lib. vi. § 23.

† Plutarch, in the Notable sayings of the Lacedæmonians.

"great



“ great and exemplary thing canst thou think thou dost, in embracing the snow? A man, to take a true measure of constancy, must necessarily know what suffering is.

Diogenes patient of cold.

But souls that are to meet with cross events, and the injuries of fortune in their depth and severity, that are to weigh and taste them according to their natural weight and sharpness, let such shew their skill in avoiding the causes and diverting the blow. What did king Cotys do \*?

How Montaigne endeavoured to prevent bad accidents in the management of his affairs and actions.

He paid me liberally for the rich and beautiful vessel that had been presented him; but it being exceeding brittle, he immediately broke it to prevent in good time so easy a matter of displeasure against his servants. In like manner, I have willingly avoided all confusion in my affairs, and never coveted to have my estate contiguous to those of my relations, and persons with whom I was desirous of a strict friendship; whence matters of unkindness, and which has oft occasioned a strangeness and a separation. I have formerly loved the hazardous games of cards and dice, but have long since left them off, only for this reason, that though I put a good face on my losses, I was vexed at my heart. Let a man of honour, who ought heartily to resent a lye and an affront, and who is not to take a bad excuse for satisfaction, avoid occasions of dispute. I shun melancholic and morose men, as I would do the plague. And in matters I cannot treat of without emotion and concern, I never meddle, if not compelled by my duty. *Melius non incipient, quam desinent* †; “ a man had better never “ to have begun, than to leave undone.” The surest way therefore, is, to prepare a man’s self beforehand for occasions. I know very well, that some wise men have taken another course, and have not feared to grapple and engage to the utmost upon several subjects. Such are

A rich vessel purposely broken by king Cotys and why.

\* Plutarch, in the Notable sayings of ancient kings, &c. in the article Cotys.

† Senec. ep. 92.



confident of their own strength, under which they protect themselves in all ill successes, making their patience wrestle with disasters.

*—Velut rupes vastum quæ prædit in æquor,  
Obvia venturæ furis, expositæque ponto,  
Vim cunctam atque minas perfert calique marisque,  
Ipsa immota manens.\**

He as a rock amongst vast billows stood,  
Scorning loud winds, and raging of the flood,  
And fix'd remaining all the force defies  
Must'rd from threat'ning seas and thund'ring skies†.

Let us never attempt these examples, we shall never come up to them. They set themselves resolutely, and without trouble, to behold the ruin of their country, which had a right to all the good they could do. This is too much, and too harsh for our vulgar souls to undergo. Cato indeed gave up the noblest life that ever was upon this account; but it is for us meaner spirited men to fly from the storm as far as we can; we ought to make provision of resentment, not of patience, and evade the blows we cannot put by. Zeno seeing Chremonides, a young man whom he loved, draw near to sit down by him, suddenly started up, and Cleanthes demanding of him the reason why he did so, "I hear, said he, that physicians strictly enjoin repose, and forbid emotion in all tumours‡." Socrates says not, Do not surrender to the charms of beauty, stand your ground, and do your utmost to oppose it. Fly from it, says he, shun the sight and encounter of it, as you would from strong poison that darts and wounds at a distance. And his good disciple||, either feigning or reciting, but in my opinion, rather reciting than feigning the rare perfections of that great Cyrus, makes him distrustful of his own strength, to resist the charms of the divine beauty of the illustrious Panthea, his captive, in committing her to the observa-

\* Virgil. *Æneid.* lib. x. ver. 693.

† Mr. Ogilby.

‡ Diogenes Laert. in the life of Zeno, lib. vii. sect. 17.

|| Xenophon, in his *Cyropædia*, lib. v. cap. 1. ver. 3, 4, 5, 6.



observation and keeping of another, who was more enamoured than himself. And the Holy Ghost in like manner, *Ne nos inducas in tentationem*; "lead us not into temptation," Matth. vi. ver. 13. We do not pray that our reason may not be combated and overcome by concupiscence, but that it be not so much as tried by it; that we may not be brought into a state wherein we may be so much as liable to suffer the approaches, solicitations, and temptations of sin: and we beg of almighty God to keep our consciences quiet, fully, and perfectly free from all communication with evil.

Such as say that they have reason for their revenging passion, or any other sort of troublesome agitation of mind, oft say true, as things now are, but not as they were. They speak to us when the causes of their error are by themselves nourished and advanced. But look backward, recal these causes to their beginning, and there you will put them to a nonplus; will they think their fault less for being of longer continuance, and that of an unjust beginning, the sequel can be just? whoever shall desire the good of his country as I do, without fretting or pining himself, will be chagrined, but will not swoon to see it threatening either its final ruin, or no less ruinous continuance. Poor vessel, which the waves, the winds, and the pilot, steer to with such contrary views!

He endeavoured to check the first folly of his passions.

*—in tam diversa, magister,  
Ventus, & unda trabunt.\**

He who pants not for the favour of princes, as a thing he cannot live without, does not much concern himself at the coldness of their reception and countenance, nor at the inconstancy of their humours. He who does not brood over his children, or his honours, with a slavish fondness, lives commodiously enough after their loss. He that does good principally for his own satisfaction, will not be much troubled to see men judge of

• Buchanan.



his actions contrary to his merit. A quarter of an ounce of patience will be enough against such inconveniencies. I find satisfaction in this receipt, redeeming myself in the beginning as cheaply as I can; and am sensible that I have thereby escaped much trouble and many difficulties. With very little ado I stop the first fall of my passions, and leave the subject that begins to be troublesome before it transports me. He who stops not the start, will never be able to stop the career. He who cannot keep the passions out, will never drive them out when they are got in; and he who cannot crush them at the beginning, will never do it in the end, nor ever recover his fall, if he cannot stand the shock. *Et enim ipsæ se impellunt, ubi semel à ratione discessum est: ipsaque sibi imbecillitas indulget, in altumque provebitur imprudens: ne creperit locum consistendi*\*; “for men are precipitant, when once they lose their  
 “reason; and frailty does so far indulge itself, that it is in-  
 “discreetly carried out into the deep, and can find no port  
 “to stop at.” I am betimes sensible of the little breezes that begin to whistle in the Shrowds, the forerunners of a storm.

—*ceu flamina prima*

*Cum deprensa fremunt sylvis, & cæca volutant  
 Murmura, venturos nautis prodentia ventos* †.

— As when winds rise,  
 And stopt by woods, a sudden murmur send,  
 Which doth a storm to mariners portend ‡.

With what  
 care he avoided  
 law suits.

How oft have I done myself a manifest  
 injustice to avoid the hazard of having yet  
 a worse done me by the judges, after an  
 age of vexations, dirty and vile practices, more enemies  
 to my nature than fire, or the rack? *Convenie à litibus  
 quantum licet, & nescio an paulò plus etiam quàm licet, ab-  
 horrentum esse. Est enim non modò liberale paululum nonnun-  
 quam de suo jure decedere, sed interdum etiam fructuosum* || ;  
 “A man should be an enemy to all contention as much as

\* Cicero Tusc. lib. iv. cap. 18.

† Mr. Ogilby.

‡ Æneid. lib. x. ver. 97, &c.

|| Cicer. de Offic. lib. ii. c. 8.



“ he lawfully may, and for ought I know something more:  
 “ for it is not only generous, but sometimes also advantageous, to recede a little from one’s right.” Were we wise, we ought to rejoice and boast, as I one day heard a young gentleman of a good family very innocently do, that his mother had lost her trial, as if it had been a cough, a fever, or something very troublesome to keep: even the favours that fortune might have given me through relations, or acquaintance with persons who have great interest, I have very conscientiously waved, and very carefully avoided employing them to the prejudice of others, and of advancing my pretensions above their true value. In fine, I have so much prevailed by my endeavours, in a happy hour I may speak it, that I am at this day a virgin from all suits in law; though I have had very fair offers made me, and with a very just title, would I have hearkened to them: and a virgin from quarrels too. I have almost past over a long life without any offence of moment, either active or passive, or without ever hearing a worse word than my own name: a rare favour of heaven.

Our greatest agitations arise from ridiculous motives and causes. What ruin did our last duke of *Burgundy* run into by a quarrel about a cart-load of sheep-skins \*?

The most violent passions raised from trifling causes.

And was not the graving of a seal the first and principal cause of the greatest commotion that that this machine of the world ever underwent †? for *Pompey* and *Cæsar* are but the off-sets and slips of the two others. And I have, in my time seen the wisest heads in this kingdom assembled with great ceremony, and at the public expence, about treaties and agreements, of which the true decision absolutely depended upon a cabinet council of ladies, and the inclination of some foolish woman. The poets had a right notion of this, when they put all *Greece* and *Asia* to fire and sword for an apple. Enquire why such a man stakes his life and honour upon the fortune of

\* See the *Memoirs of Philip de Comines*, lib. v. cap. 1.

† The civil war betwixt *Marius* and *Sylla*. See *Plutarch*, in the life of *Marius*, chap. 3. of *Amyot’s* translation.



his rapier and dagger; let him acquaint you with the occasion of the quarrel, he cannot do it without blushing, it is so idle and frivolous.

The necessity of  
délibration  
before we en-  
gage in affairs,  
especially quar-  
rels.

A little thing will do at setting off, but being once embarked, all cords draw; great provisions are then required, more hard, and more important. How much easier is it not to enter in, than it is to get out?

Now, we should proceed contrary to the reed, which at its first springing, produces a long and strait stalk, but afterwards, as if tired and out of breath, it runs into thick and frequent knots, as so many pauses; which demonstrates that it has no more its first vigour and constancy. It were better to begin fair and softly, and to keep a man's breath and vigorous efforts for the height and stress of the business. We guide affairs in their beginnings, and have them then in our own power; but afterwards when they are in motion, it is they that guide and govern us, and we are to follow them. Yet I pretend not hereby to say, that this counsel has discharged me of all difficulty, and that I have not often had enough to do to curb and restrain my passions. They are not always to be governed according to the measure of occasions, and the entrance on them is often sharp and violent; so it is, that thereby much may be saved and got; except for those, who in well-doing are not satisfied with any benefit, if reputation be wanting: for in truth, such an effect is of no estimation but by every one to himself. You are better contented with it, but not more esteemed; seeing you reformed yourself before you had the subject in view. Yet not in this only; but in all other duties of life, the way of those who aim at honour, is very different from that they proceed by, who propose to themselves order and reason. I find some who rashly and furiously rush into the lists, and cool in the course. As *Plutarch* says, that as those who through false modesty are soft and ready to grant whatever is desired of them, are afterwards as apt to break their word, and to recant; so likewise he who enters lightly into a quarrel, is subject to go as lightly out. The same difficulty that keeps me from entering  
into



into it, would, when I am once provoked and warinly engaged in it, spur me to maintain it with great obstinacy.\* It is the tyranny of custom; that when a Man is once engaged, he must persist, or die. "Undertake coldly, said Bias, but pursue with ardour\*." For want of prudence, men grow faint-hearted, which is still more intolerable.

Most accommodations of the quarrels of these days, are shameful and false; we only seek to save appearances, and in the mean time betray and disavow our

Most accommodations of our quarrels are scandalous.

true intentions. We put a gloss on the fact. We know very well how we said the thing, and in what sense we spoke it, and both all the company, and our friends, whom we would make sensible of our advantage, understand it well enough too. It is at the expence of our liberty, and the honour of our courage, that we disown our thoughts, and seek subterfuge in falsehoods to make us friends. We give ourselves the lye, to excuse the lye we have given to another. You are not to consider, if your word or action may admit of another interpretation; it is your own true and sincere interpretation that you are thenceforward to maintain, whatever it cost you. Men speak to your virtue and conscience, which are not things to be disguised. Let us leave these pitiful ways and expedients to the chicanery of the courts of law. The apologies and satisfactions that I see every day made to excuse indiscretion, seem to me more scandalous than the indiscretion itself. It were better to affront your adversary a second time, than to offend yourself by giving him so unmanly a satisfaction. You have braved him in your anger, and you go to appease and wheedle him in your cooler and better sense, and by that means lay yourself lower than you set yourself up. I do not think any thing a gentleman can say so vicious in him, as unsaying what he has said is infamous; when he is forced to unsay it by authority; forasmuch as obstinacy is more excusable in such a man than pusillanimity. Passions are

\* Diogenes Laert. in the life of Bias. lib. i. § 87.



as easy for me to avoid, as they are hard for me to moderate. *Excinduntur facilius animo, quam temperantur*; "they are more easily eradicated than to be governed." Who cannot attain to this noble stoical impassibility, let him secure himself in the bosom of this popular stupidity of mine. What those great souls performed by their virtue, I enure myself to do by constitution. The middle region harbours tempests; the two extremes of philosophers and peasants concur in tranquility and happiness.

*Fœlix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas;  
Atque metus omnes, & in exorabile fatum  
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.  
Fortunatus, & ille, Deos qui novit agrestes,  
Panaque Sylvanumque senem, Nymphasque sorores\*.*

Happy the man who vers'd in nature's laws,  
Of her effects can trace the wond'rous cause?  
Who without fear his certain fate can meet,  
And trample death itself beneath his feet;  
And happy he who haunts the rural gods,  
Pan and Sylvanus, and the nymphs abodes †.

The births of all things are weak and tender, and therefore are we to have an eye to their beginnings; for as when in their infancy the danger is not perceived; so when it is grown up, the remedy is no more to be found. I had every day encountered a million of crosses, harder to digest in the progress of my ambition, than it was for me to curb the natural propensity that inclined me to it.

*— jure porhorruī,  
Latè conspicuum tolerare verticem ‡.*

Well might thy friend be shy,  
To raise his head too high ||.

\* Virgil. Georg. lib. ii. ver. 490.

‡ Hor. lib. iii. ode 16. ver. 18.

† Mr. Benson.

|| Sir Rich. Fanshawe.



All public actions are subject to various and uncertain interpretations, for too many heads judge of them. Some say of this city-employment of mine (and I am willing to say a word or two of it, not that it is worth so much, but to give an account of my manners in such things) that I behaved myself in it like a man not easy to be moved, and with a languid affection: and they have some colour for what they say. I endeavour to keep my mind and my thoughts in repose. *Cum semper naturâ, tum etiam ætate jam quietus*; “as being always quiet by nature, so also now by age.” If they sometimes launch out upon some rude and sensible impression, it is in truth without my advice. Yet from this natural decay of my spirits men ought not to conclude a total inability in me; (for want of care and want of sense, are two things) and much less any slight or ingratitude towards that corporation, who did their utmost to oblige me, both before they knew me and after. And they did much more for me in chusing me anew, than in conferring that honour upon me at first; I wish them all the good that can be. And doubtless, upon occasion, there is nothing I would have spared for their service; I exerted myself as much for them as I would have done for myself. They are a good, warlike and generous people, but capable of obedience and discipline, and of whom good use may be made, if they are well guided. They say also, that my administration was passed over without any action of importance. It is true: they moreover accuse my indolence in a time when every body almost was convinced of doing too much. I am impatient to be doing where my will spurs me on, but this point is an enemy to perseverance. Whoever will make use of me, according to my own way, let him employ me in affairs where vigour and liberty are required; where a direct, short, and a hazardous conduct are necessary, I perhaps may do something; but if it must be long, subtle, laborious, artificial, and intricate, they were better apply to somebody else. All important offices are not difficult: I was prepared for work a little more rough,  
had

What others  
as well as  
Montaigne  
himself thought  
of his conduct,  
while he was  
mayor of  
Bordeaux.



had there been great occasion; for it is in my power to do something more than I do, and than I love to do; I did not to my knowledge, omit any thing that my duty really required; it is true, that I easily forgot those offices that ambition mixes with duty, and gilds with its title. Those are they, that for the most part ingross the eyes and ears, and give men the most satisfaction. Not the thing, but the appearance contents them. They think men sleep if they hear no noise. My humour is an enemy to tumult. I could appease a riot without disturbing myself, and chastise a disorder without many words. If I stand in need of anger, and inflammation, I borrow it, and put it on as a mask; my deportment is dull; rather faint than sharp. I do not condemn a magistrate that sleeps, provided the people under his charge sleep as well as he: the laws in that case sleep too. For my part, I commend a smooth, solitary and silent life. *Neque submissam, & abjectam, neque se efforentem\**; “a life equally free from meanness and insolence.” My fortune requires it to be such. I am descended from a family that has lived without lustre or tumult, and time out of mind particularly ambitious of valour and sincerity. Our people now adays are so bred up to bustle and ostentation, that good-nature, moderation, equity, constancy, and such quiet and obscure qualities, are no longer regarded. Rough bodies are easily felt, the smooth ones scarce at all. Sicknes is felt, health little, if at all, no more than the oils that foment us, in comparison of the pains that torment us. It is acting for a man's reputation and particular profit, not for the public weal, to refer that to be done in the forum, which a man may as well do in the council-chamber; to put off to noon-day, what might have been done the night before; and to be zealous to do that himself which his colleague can do as well as he. So some surgeons of Greece performed their operations upon scaffolds, in the sight of the people, to draw more practice and custom. They think that good rules cannot be un-

\* Cicero de Offic. lib. i. cap. 34.



derstood but by the sound of trumpet. Ambition is not a vice of little people, and of such abilities as ours. One said to Alexander, your father will leave you a great dominion, easy and peaceable; this youth was emulous of his father's victories, and the justice of his government, and did not wish to have enjoyed the empire of the world in ease and peace. Alcibiades in Plato, had rather die exceeding young, beautiful, rich, noble, and learned, than to continue in such an effeminate state. This disease is perhaps excusable in so strong and so capacious a mind. When these poor mean souls enlarge themselves, and think to spread their fame, for having given right judgment in an affair, or continued the discipline of keeping the guard of a gate of their city; the more they think to exalt their heads, the more they shew their tails. This little well-doing has neither body nor life; it vanishes in the first mouth, and goes no farther than from one street to another. Talk of it in God's name to your son, or your servant; like that old fellow, who having no other auditor of his praises, nor commander of his valour, boasted to his chamber-maid, crying out, O Perret, what a gallant brave man has thou to thy master! At the worst talk of it to yourself, like a counsellor of my acquaintance, who having disgorged a whole bundle of law cases, full of paragraphs, with very great heat, and as great folly, coming out of the council-chamber to the pissing place, was heard very conscientiously to mutter betwixt his teeth, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam*; "not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory." He who can get it of nobody else, may pay himself out of his own purse. Fame is not prostituted at so cheap a rate. Rare and exemplary actions, to which it is due, would not endure the company of this prodigious croud of little temporary performances. Marble may exalt your titles as much as you please, for having repaired a rood of a ruinous wall, or cleansed a public aqueduct, but no men of sense will do it. Renown does not attend every good deed, if novelty and difficulty be not conjoined in it. Nay, so much as mere estimation,



mation, according to the Stoics, is not due to every action that proceeds from virtue; neither will they allow him so much as thanks, who out of temperance forbears to meddle with any old blear-eyed hag. Such as have known the admirable qualities of Scipio Africanus, deny him the glory that Panætius attributes to him, of being abstinent from gifts as a glory not so much his, as that of the age he lived in. We have pleasures suitable to our fortunes, let us not usurp those of grandeur. Our own are more natural, and by so much more solid and sure, as they are more low. If not for that of conscience, yet at least for ambition sake, let us reject ambition, let us disdain that thirst of honour and renown, so low and beggarly, that it makes us ask it as an alms from all sorts of people: *Quæ est ista laus quæ possit à macello peti* \* ? “What praise is that which is to be got at “the shambles?” by abject means, and at any cheap rate soever. To be so honoured is dishonour. Let us learn to be no more greedy, than we are capable of honour. To be puffed up with every action that is innocent, or of use, is only for those with whom such deeds are extraordinary and rare; they will value it as it costs them. How much more a good effect makes a noise, so much I abate of the goodness of it; and suspect that it was more performed to be talked of, than upon the account of its goodness: being exposed upon the stall, it is half sold. Those actions have much more grace, that slip from the hand of the performer negligently, and without noise; and which some honest man afterwards chuses out, and raises from the shade, to produce it to the light for their own sakes. The vainest man in the world said, *mibi quidem laudabilia videntur omnia, quæ sive venditione, & sine populo teste fiunt* †; “all things truly “seem more laudable to me, that are performed without “ostentation, and without the testimony of the people.” I had nothing to do but to preserve and to continue, which are silent and sensible effects. Innovation is of great

\* Cicero de Fin. Bon. & Mal. lib. xi. cap. 15.  
Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 26.

† Cicero Tusc.



Iustre, but it is interdicted at this time, when we are pressed upon, and have nothing to defend ourselves from but novelties. To forbear doing, is often as generous as to do, but it is not so conspicuous; and the little good I have in me is almost entirely of this kind. In fine, occasions in this employment of mine, have been consistent with my humour, and I thank them for it. Is there any one who desires to be sick for the sake of seeing his physician employed? And should not that physician be whipped, who wished the plague amongst us, that he might put his art in practice? I was never of that wicked humour, though common enough, to desire that the trouble and disorders of this city should set off and do honour to my government; I heartily contributed all I could to their tranquility and ease. He who will not thank me for the order, the sweet and silent calm that accompanied my administration, cannot however deprive me of the share of it that belongs to me by the title of my good fortune. I am of such a composition, that I would as willingly be happy as wise; and had rather owe my successes purely to the favour of Almighty God, than to any operation of my own. I had sufficiently published to the world my unfitness for such public offices; but I have something in me yet worse than incapacity; which is, that I am not much displeased at it, and that I do not much go about to cure it, considering the course of life that I have proposed to myself. Neither have I satisfied myself in this employment, but I have very near arrived at what I expected from my own performance, and yet have much surpassed what I promised them with whom I had to do: for I am apt to promise something less than what I am able to perform, and than what I hope to make good. I assure myself that I have left no impressions of offence or hatred behind me, and that I will leave a regret or desire of me amongst them. I at least know very well that I never much affected it.



*—mène buie confidere monstro,  
Mène salis placidi vultum, fluctusque quietas  
Ignorare \* ?*

Me dost thou bid to trust the treach'rous deep !  
Her harlot smiles shall I believe again,  
And oft betray'd, not know the monster main ?

## C H A P. XI.

### *Of Cripples.*

The year cut  
ten days  
shorter.

**I**T is now two or three years ago that they made the year ten days shorter in France. How many changes may we expect to follow this reformation ? This was properly removing heaven and earth at once ; and yet nothing stirs from its place : my neighbours still find their seasons of sowing and reaping, and of trading, together with the lucky and unlucky days, just at the same instant, where they had time out of mind assigned them. There was no error perceived in our old usage, nor is there amendment found in the new. So great an uncertainty there is throughout ; so gross, obscure and dull is our perception ! It is said, that this regulation might have been carried on with less inconvenience, by subtracting for some years, according to the example of Augustus, the Bissextile, which is upon the whole a day of hindrance and confusion, till we had exactly satisfied that debt ; which is not performed neither by this correction, and we yet remain some days in arrear : and surely by the same means care might be taken for the future, by ordering, that after the revolution of such a year, or such a number of years, this supernumerary day might be always eclipsed, so that we could not



henceforward excited four and twenty hours in our misreckoning. We have no other account of time but years; the world has for many ages made use of that only, and yet it is a measure that to this day we have not fixed upon; such a one, that we still doubt what form other nations have variously given to it, and what was the true use of it. What does this saying of some mean, “that the heavens, in growing old, press nearer towards us, and put us to an uncertainty even of hours and days? And that which Plutarch says of the months, that astrology had not, in his time, determined the motion of the moon?” So, what a fine condition are we in to keep records of things past!

I was just now ruminating, as I often do, what a free and roving thing human reason is. I ordinarily see, that men, in things proposed to them, are more curious to find out the reason of a thing, than to find out the truth of it. They slip over suppositions, but nicely examine consequences. They leave the things and fly to the causes. Pleasant disputants!

The vanity of the human understanding, which often seeks for the causes of a fact, before there is a certainty of such fact.

The knowledge of causes only concerns him who has the conduct of things, not us, who are only to undergo them, and who have a full and complete use of them according to our need, without penetrating into their original and essence. Neither is wine more pleasant to him that knows its first qualities. On the contrary, both the body and soul alter and interrupt the right they have of the use of the world, and of themselves, by mixing with it in the opinion of learning. Effects concern us, but the means not at all. To determine and to distribute appertain to the superior and the governor, as it does to the subject and the learner to accept it. Let me resume our custom. They commonly begin thus: “how is such a thing done?” Whereas they should say, “is such a thing done?” By our talk we are able to create an hundred other worlds, and to find out the beginnings and contexture; it needs neither matter nor foundation. Let the tongue



tongue run, it builds as well in a vacuum as on the earth; and with inanity as well as matter.

*Dare pondus idonea fumo \*.*

And can give weight to smoke.

I find, that almost throughout we should say, "there is no such thing;" and would myself oft make use of this answer, but I dare not; for they cry, it is a defect produced from ignorance and weakness of understanding. And I am forced, for the most part, to play the impertinent for company, and to prate of frivolous and idle subjects, of which I believe not a word. Besides, in truth, it is a little rude flatly to deny a proposition; and there are few people but will affirm, especially in things hard to be believed, that they have seen them, or at least will name such witnesses whose authority stops our contradiction. By this means we know the foundations and means of a thousand things that never were; and the world scolds about a thousand questions, of which the *pro* and *con* are both false. *Ita finitima sunt falsa veris, ut in præcipitem locum non debeat se sapiens committere †*; "false things are so like the true, that a wise man should not trust himself upon the precipice." Truth and lies have the same aspect, their port, taste, and paces, are the same, and we look upon them with the same eye. I find that we are not only remiss in defending ourselves from deceit, but we seek and offer ourselves to be gulled; we love to entangle ourselves in vanity, as a thing conformable to our being.

What credit  
false miracles  
have gained  
in the world.

I have seen the birth of many miracles of my time, which although they were still-born, yet have we not failed to foresee what they would have come to, had they lived. It is but finding the end of the clue, and a man may wind off as much as he will; and there is a greater distance

\* Persius, sat. v. ver. 20.

† Cicero Quæst. Acad. lib. iv. cap. 21.

betwixt



betwixt nothing, and the minutest thing in the world, than there is betwixt that and the greatest. Now, the first that are tinctured with this beginning of novelty, when they set out their history, find, by the opposition they meet with, where the difficulty of persuasion lies, and caulk that place with some false piece. Besides that, *Infita hominibus libidine alendi de industria rumores*; “men having a natural lust to propagate reports,” we naturally make a conscience of restoring what has been lent us, without some usury and addition of our own invention. Private error first creates public error; and afterwards, in turn, public error causes a particular one; thus all this fabric rises by patchwork from hand to hand, so that the remotest witness knows more than those that are nearest; and the last informed is more certain than the first. It is a natural progress: for whoever believes any thing, thinks it a work of charity to persuade another into the same opinion. Which the better to do, he will make no difficulty of adding as much of his own invention, as he conceives necessary to obviate the resistance or want of conception he supposes in others. I myself, who make a particular conscience of lying, and am not very solicitous of gaining credit and authority to what I say, yet find, that in the arguments I have in hand, being warmed with the opposition of another, or by the proper heat of my own narration, I swell and puff up my subject by voice, motion, vigour, and force of words; and likewise by extention and amplification; not without prejudice to the naked truth: but I do it on condition nevertheless, that to the first who brings me to recollection and who asks me the plain and real truth, I presently surrender, and deliver it to him without exaggeration, without emphasis, or any interlarding of my own. A quick and earnest way of speaking, as mine is, is apt to run into hyperbole. There is nothing to which men commonly are more inclined, than to give way to their own opinions. Where the ordinary means fail us, we add command and force, fire and sword. It is a mis-



fortune to be at that pass, that the best touchstone of the truth, must be the multitude of believers, in a crowd; where the number of fools so much exceeds the wise. *Quasi vero quidquam sit tam valde, quam nihil sapere; vulgare. Sanitatis patrocinium est, insanientium turba* \*; “as if any thing were so common as ignorance. The mob of fools is a protection to the wise.” It is hard for a man to form his judgment against the common opinions. The first persuasion taken of the very subject itself, possesses the simple, and from that it spreads to the wise, by the authority of the number and antiquity of the witnesses. For my part, what I would not believe from one, I would not believe from a hundred; and I do not judge of opinions by the years. It is not long since one of our princes, in whom the gout has spoiled an excellent natural genius, and sprightly disposition, suffered himself to be so far persuaded with the report of the wonderful

A priest that cured all sorts of diseases by words and gestures.

operations of a certain priest, who by words and gestures cured all sorts of diseases, as to go a long journey to seek him out; and by the force of his apprehension for some time, so persuaded and laid his legs asleep for several hours as to obtain that service from them which they had a long time left off. Had fortune packed together five or six such accidents, it had been enough to have brought this miracle into nature. There was after this discovered so much simplicity, and so little art in the architect of such operations, that he was thought too contemptible to be punished; as would be the case of most such things, were they examined to the bottom. *Miramur ex intervallo fallentia* †; “we admire at things that deceive by their distance.” So does our sight oft represent to us strange images at a distance, that vanish in approaching them near. *Nunquam ad liquidam fama perducitur* ‡; “fame never reports things in their true light.

\* Cicero De div. lib. ii. cap. 39.  
† Senec. ep. 118.

Item Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 1.  
‡ Qu. Curtius lib. ix. cap. 2.



It is to be wondered at, from how many idle beginnings and frivolous causes such famous impressions commonly proceed. This it is that obstructs the information; for whilst we seek out the causes, and the great and weighty ends, worthy of so great a name, we lose the true ones. They escape our sight by their littleness: and, in truth, a prudent, diligent, and subtle enquirer is necessary in such searches; one who is indifferent and not prepossessed.

How it comes to be so difficult a matter to be convinced that a miracle is false.

To this very hour all these miracles and strange events have concealed themselves from me; I have never seen a more evident monster or miracle in the world than myself: a man grows familiar with all strange things by time and custom; but the more I visit, and the better I know myself, the more does my own deformity astonish me, and the less I understand of myself.

What Montaigne thought the clearest of miracles.

The chief prerogative of advancing and producing such accidents, is reserved to fortune. Riding the other day through a village, about two leagues from my house, I found the place yet hot with the rumour of a miracle lately wrought there, wherewith the neighbourhood had been several months amused, so that neighbouring provinces began to take the alarm, and there was a vast concourse to it of all sorts of people. A young fellow of the town, had one night counterfeited the voice of a spirit in his own house, without any other design, but only for present sport; but this having succeeded with him a little better than he expected, in order to illustrate his farce with more actors, he took a stupid silly country girl into the scene, and at last they were three of the same age and understanding, who from domestic lectures, proceeded to public preaching, hiding themselves under the altar of the church, never speaking but by night, and forbidding any light to be brought. From words which tended to the conversion of the world, and threats of the day of judgment (for these are subjects under the authority and reverence of which imposture lies

Story of a miracle's very near gaining credit though built on a very weak foundation.



most securely concealed) they proceeded to visions and gestures, so simple and ridiculous, that nothing could hardly be so gross in the diversion of little children : yet had fortune never so little favoured the design, who knows to what height this juggling might have at last arrived ? These poor devils are at present in prison, and are like to pay for their imposition on the public, and I know not whether some judge may not also make them smart for imposing on him. We see clearly in this which is discovered ; but in many things of the like nature, that exceed our knowledge, I am of opinion, that we ought to suspend our judgment, and to keep it in a state as fit to reject as to receive them.

The foundation  
of all the impos-  
tures in the  
world.

Great abuse, or, to speak more boldly, all the abuses of the world are begot by our being taught to be afraid of professing our ignorance, and from our being bound to accept whatever we are not able to confute. We speak of all things by precepts and decision. The style of Rome was, that even that which a witness deposed he had seen with his own eyes, and what a judge determined from his most certain knowledge, was couched in this form of speaking, "it seems". They make me hate things that are likely, when they impose them upon me for infallible. I love those words which mollify and moderate the temerity of our propositions, "perhaps, in some sort, some say, I think," and the like : and had I been to train up children, I would have so familiarised them to the interrogatory and not peremptory way of answering, "what does this mean ? I understand it not ; it may be ; is it true ;" that they should rather have retained the form of pupils at threescore years old, than to go out doctors at ten, as they now do. Whoever will be cured of ignorance, must confess it.

A kind of ignorance much to be esteemed.

Iris is the daughter of Thaumantis ; admiration is the foundation of all philosophy, inquiry the progress, and ignorance the end. Nay in truth, there is a sort of ignorance strong and generous, that yields nothing in honour and courage to knowledge ; an ignorance, of which to conceive,



ceive, requires no less knowledge than to conceive of knowledge itself. I say in my younger years, a process which Corras a counsellor of Tholouse published, of a strange accident of two men, who presented themselves the one for the other. I remember (and I hardly remember any thing so well) that he seemed to have rendered the imposture of him whom he judged to be guilty, so wonderful, and so far exceeding both our knowledge and his own, who was the judge, that I thought it a very bold sentence which condemned him to be hanged. Let us take up some form of arrest, that says, "the court understands nothing of the matter;" more freely and ingenuously than the Areopagites did, who finding themselves perplexed with a cause they could not unravel, ordered the parties to appear again after an hundred years.

The witches of my neighbourhood run a hazard of their lives, upon the intelligence of every new author, that gives a real substance to their dreams. To accommodate the examples that holy writ gives us of such things, examples that are most certain and irrefragable, and to make

Whether from the miracles reported in the sacred scriptures any thing can be inferred in favour of such modern events.

our modern events of the same kind, as we neither see their causes nor their means, will require another sort of wit than ours. It perhaps only appertains to that most potent testimony, to tell us, "this is true, and that is true, and not that other." God ought to be believed, and certainly with very good reason; but not one amongst us, for all that, who is astonished at his own narration, (and he must of necessity be astonished, if he be not out of his wits) whether he employ it in the case of another, or against himself.

I am plain and blunt, and am inclined to that which is solid and more likely, avoiding those ancient reproaches, *Majorem fidem homines adhibent eis quæ non intelligunt. Cupidine humani ingenii libentius obscura creduntur* \*; "men are most apt to

As to witches Montaigne refused to determine any thing, and treated most of the stories concerning them as chimæras.

\* Tacit. Hist. lib. i. cap. 22.



“believe obscure things and what they least understand.” I see very well that men are angry, and that I am forbidden to doubt upon pain of execrable injuries. A new way of persuading! God forgive them. I am not to be cuffed into belief. Let them be angry with those that accuse their opinion of falsity, I only accuse it of difficulty and boldness; and condemn the opposite affirmation equally with them, though not so imperiously. He who establishes his argument by authority and hectoring, discovers his reason to be weak. For a verbal and scholastic altercation, let them have as much appearance as their contradictors. *Videantur sanè, non affirmantur modò*\*; “be the things that are advanced probable, well and good; provided they are not absolutely affirmed.” But in the real consequence they draw from it, these have much the advantage. To convince men, a clear and shining light is required. Our life is too real and essential a thing to warrant those supernatural and fantastic accidents. As to drugs and poisons, I throw them out of my account, as being the worst sorts of homicide: yet even in this, it is said, that men are not always to insist upon the proper confessions of these people; for men have sometimes been known to accuse themselves of the murder of persons who have afterwards been found living and well. In these other extravagant accusations, I would be apt to say, it is sufficient that a man, what recommendation soever he may have, be believed in human things; but of what is beyond his conception, and of a supernatural effect, he ought then only to be believed, when it is authorized by a supernatural approbation. The privilege it has pleased God to give to some of our testimonies, ought not to be lightly communicated and made cheap. I have my ears battered with a thousand such flim-flams as these. “Three saw him such a day in the east; three the next day in the west; at such an hour, in such a place, and in such a habit.” In earnest, I would not take my own word for it. How much more natural and likely do I find it that two men

\* Cit. Acad. Quest. lib. iv. cap. 27.



should lye, than that one man, in twelve hours time, should fly with the wind from east to west? How much more natural, that our understanding should be perverted by the volubility of our disordered minds, than it is that one of us should be carried, by a strange spirit, upon a broomstick, flesh and bones, as we are, up the shaft of a chimney? Let us not seek delusions that are external and unknown, we who are perpetually agitated with delusions that are domestic and our own. Methinks a man is pardonable in disbelieving a miracle, as far at least as he can divert and expunge the verification of it by no wonderful ways. And I am of St. Augustine's opinion, that it is better to lean towards doubt than assurance, in things hard to prove, and dangerous to believe. It is now some years ago, that I travelled through the territories of a sovereign prince, who, in my favour, and to abate my incredulity, did me the honour to let me see, in his own presence, and in a particular place, ten or twelve prisoners of this kind: and amongst others, an old hag, a real witch in nastiness and deformity, who long had been famous in that profession. I saw both proofs and free confessions, and I know not what un- Witch-marks. : accountable mark upon this miserable old creature: I examined and talked with her, and the rest, as much and as long as I would, and gave the utmost attention I could; neither am I a man to suffer my judgment to be captivated by prepossession; but upon the whole in my conscience I would sooner have prescribed them hellebore than hemlock. *Captisque res magis mentibus, quam consceleratis similis visa* \*; "the thing seemed rather to be attributed to madness than malice." Justice has correction proper for such maladies. As to the oppositions and arguments that I have met with from honest men, both there and oft in other places, I have found none that have convinced me, and that have not admitted a more likely solution than their conclusions.



It is true indeed, that as to proofs and reasons that are founded upon experience and matter of fact, I do not unhinge them, neither have they any end. I often cut them, as Alexander did the Gordian knot. After all, it is setting a man's conjectures up at a very high price, to cause a man to be roasted alive for them.

He is induced to think that witches are crack-brained; but does not pretend that his word should be taken for it.

We are told by several examples (and particularly by Præstantius\* of his father) that being more drowned in sleep than men generally are, he fancied himself to be a beast of burthen, and that he served the soldiers for a sumpter-horse; and what he fancied himself to be, he really proved. If witches dream so materially; if dreams can sometimes so incorporate themselves in the effects, I cannot believe that therefore our wills should be accountable to justice; which I say, as a man, who am neither judge nor privy counsellor; and who think myself by many degrees unworthy so to be, but a man of the common sort born, and devoted to the obedience of the public reason, both in his words and actions. He that would quote my whimsies to the prejudice of the most paltry law, opinion, and custom of his parish, would do himself a great deal of wrong, and me much more. For in what I say, I warrant no other certainty, but that it is what I had then in my thought. Confused

\* After a fruitless search to find out who were this Præstantius and his father, I was informed by M. de la Monnoye, whom nothing escapes. He referred me to the tract de Civitate Dei, lib. xviii. cap. 18. where St. Austin reports the fact as follows, viz. One Præstantius said, that his father having eaten some cheese in which there had been a spell, slept several days in his bed so sound that none could awake him, till the lethargy going off, he told the visions he had had, viz. that he was turned into a horse, and that in this shape he had served the soldiers for a sumpter-horse, which, says St. Austin, actually happened as he related it. The holy father is of opinion, that in cases of this sort the devil presents to the spectators a visionary body which they take for a real animal, a horse, an ass, &c. and that the man who imagines himself to be that ass, or that horse, thinks he carries a real burden, as much as it was possible for him to fancy it in a dream; so that if such phantom of an animal carries real bodies, they are the Dæmons who carry them in order to deceive men, who then see real bodies or the back of a sumpter-horse, which is a mere phantom.



and wavering thought. All I say is by way of discourse, and nothing by way of advice. *Nec me pudet, ut istos, fateri nescire, quod nesciam* \* : “neither am I ashamed, “as they are, to confess my ignorance of what I do not “know.” I would not speak so boldly, if it were my due to be believed. And so I told a great man, who complained of the tartness of my exhortations. Perceiving you to be positive on one side of the question, I propose to you the other, with all the care I can, to clear your judgment, not to bind it. God has your heart in his hands, and will furnish you with the choice. I am not so presumptuous as to desire that my opinions should bias you in a thing of so great importance. My fortune has not trained them up to such potent and sublime conclusions. Truly I have not only a great many humours, but also a great many opinions, that I would endeavour to make my son dislike, if I had one. Why? even the truest are not always the most commodious to man, he is of so wild a composition.

Whether it be to the purpose, or not, it is no great matter. It is a common proverb in Italy, “that he knows not all  
 “the pleasures of Venus to perfection, who has never  
 “lain with a cripple.” Fortune, or some particular accident, has long ago put this saying into the mouths of the people; and the same is said of the men as well as of women; for the queen of the Amazons answered a Scythian who courted her to love, *ἄριστα χολὸς οἰφεί*, “lame men perform best.” In that feminine republic, to evade the dominion of the males, they lamed them in their infancy, in their arms, legs, and the other joints that gave them advantage over the females, and only made use of them in that affair wherein we in these parts of the world make use of the sex. I would have been apt to think that the wriggling motion of the lame mistress added some new pleasure to the affair, and a certain titillation to those who are engaged in it; but I have

Reflection on a  
very odd pro-  
verb.

Lame people  
best at the sport  
of Venus.



lately learnt, that ancient philosophy has itself determined it, which says, that the legs and thighs of lame persons, not receiving, by reason of their imperfection, their due aliment, it falls out, that the genital parts above, are fuller, better supplied, and more vigorous. Or else, that this defect hindering exercise, they who suffer it are at less expence of their spirits, and come more entire to the sports of Venus; which also is the reason why the

Women weavers  
more lustful  
than other wo-  
men.

Greeks decried the women weavers, as being more hot than other women, by reason of the sedentary occupation, which they have without any great exercise of the body. What is it we may not reason of at this rate? I might also say of these, that this jogging on their seats, whilst they are at work, rouzes and provokes their desire, as the swinging and jolting of their coaches does that of our ladies of quality.

The mind of  
man forges the  
most chimerical  
reasons.

Do not these examples serve to make good what I said at first, that our reasons often anticipate the effect, and have so infinite an extent of jurisdiction, that they judge and exercise themselves, even in inanity and non-existence? Besides, the flexibility of our invention to forge reasons for all sorts of dreams, our imagination is equally ready to receive impressions of falsity, by very frivolous appearances. For by the sole authority of the ancient and common use of this proverb, I have formerly made myself believe, that I have had the more pleasure with a woman by reason she was not strait, and accordingly reckoned that deformity amongst her graces.

Contrary causes  
assigned to one  
and the same ef-  
fect.

Torquato Tasso \*, in the comparison he makes betwixt France and Italy, says, he has observed, that our legs are generally smaller than those of the Italian gentlemen: and attributes the cause of it to our being continually on horseback. The very thing from which Suetonius † draws a conclusion that is directly opposite;

\* Paragone dell' Italia alla Francia, p. 11.  
vita Caligulae, § 3.

† Suetonius, in



for he says on the contrary, that Germanicus had made his legs bigger by the continuation of the same exercise. Nothing is so supple and wandering as our understanding. It is like the shoe of Theramenes, fit for all feet. It is double and various; Theramenes shoe. as are also the subjects. "Give me a dram-weight of silver," said a Cynic philosopher to Antigonus; "that is too little for a king to give," replied he; "give me then a talent;" said the other; "and that," said the king, "is too much" for a Cynic "to ask \*."

*Seu plures calor ille vias, et cæca relaxat  
Spiramenta, novas veniat qua succus in herbas;  
Seu durat magis, et venas astringit biantes,  
Ne tenues pluviae, rapidive potentia solis  
Acrior, aut Boreæ penetrabile frigus adurat †,*

Virgil says, it is often proper to set fire to the fields, and to burn the useless stubble.

Whether the heat the gaping ground constrains,  
New knits the surface, and new strings the veins;  
Lest soaking shower's should pierce her secret seat,  
Or freezing Boreas chill her genial heat,  
Or scorching suns too violently beat,

*Ogni medaglia ha ill suo reverso ‡*; "every medal has its reverse." This is the reason why Clitomachus said of old, that Carneades had out-done the labours of Hercules, in having eradicated from the mind of man, its obstinacy and rashness of judging. This so strong fancy of Carneades, sprung, in my opinion, anciently from the impudence of those who made profession of knowledge, and their unbounded self-conceit. Æsop was set to sale with two other slaves; the buyer asked the first,

\* Seneca de Benef. lib. ii. cap. 17.

† Virg. Geor. lib. i. ver.

39, &c.

‡ Cicero Acad. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 34.



“ what he could do ;” who, to enhance his own value, promised mountains and miracles, saying, “ he could do this, and that, and I know not what ;” the second boasted as much of himself and more : when it came to Æsop’s turn, and that he was also asked, “ what he could do ?” “ Nothing,” said he, “ for these two have taken up all before me ; they can do every thing.” So has it happened in the school of philosophy. The pride of those who attributed a capacity for all things to human understanding, created in others, out of spite and emulation, this opinion, that it is capable of nothing. The one maintains the same extreme in ignorance as the others do in knowledge ; so that it is undeniable, that man is immoderate throughout, and can never stop but from necessity, and the want of ability to proceed further.

## C H A P. XII.

*Of Physignomy.*

We admire the discourses of Socrates out of pure respect to the public approbation, without discerning the true value of them.

**A**LMOST all the opinions we have are derived from authority, and taken upon trust ; and it is not amiss. We could not chuse worse than by ourselves in so weak an age. The representation of Socrates’s discourses, which his friends have transmitted to us, we approve upon no other account, but merely the reverence to public approbation. It is not according to our knowledge ; they are not after our way. If any thing of this kind should spring up now, few men would value them. We discern not the beauties otherwise than by certain features, touched up, and illustrated by art. Such as glide on in their own genuine simplicity, easily escape so gross a sight as ours ; they have a delicate and concealed beauty, and it requires the clearest sight to discover so secret a light. Is not simplicity, in the sense we accept



accept it, cousin-german to folly, and a quality of reproach? Socrates makes his soul move by a natural and common motion. “A peasant said this, a woman said that;” he never has any thing in his mouth, but carters, joiners, cobblers, and masons. They are inductions and similitudes drawn from the most common and known actions of men; every one understands them. We would never have conceived the nobility and splendor of his admirable conceptions under so vile a form; we, I say, who think all things low and flat, that are not elevated by learning, and who discern no riches but in pomp and show. This world is only formed for ostentation. Men are only puffed up with wind, and are bandied to and fro like tennis-balls. This man proposed to himself no vain fancies; his design was to furnish us with precepts and things that are really and most immediately of service to life.

—— *servare modum, finemque tenere,  
Naturamque sequi* \*.

To keep a mean, his end still to observe,  
And from the laws of nature ne’er to swerve.

He was also always one and the same, and raised himself not by starts, but by constitution, to the highest pitch of vigour; or to say better, he exalted nothing, but rather brought down and reduced all asperities and difficulties to their original and natural condition, and subjected their power: for in Cato it is most manifest, that this is a pace extended far above the common ways of men. In the brave exploits of his life, and in his death, we find him always mounted upon his managed horses. Whereas this man always skims the ground, and with a gentle and ordinary pace, delivers the most useful discourses, and bears himself up through

\* Lucan. lib. ii. ver. 381, 382.



the most crabbed difficulties that could occur in the course of human live even to death.

The character of Socrates, as it is given us by the most faithful and the clearest evidence.

It has fallen out well, that the man most worthy to be known, and to be presented to the world for example, is he of whom we have the most certain knowledge ; for he has been tried into by the most clear-sighted men that ever were. The testimonies we have of him are admirable both for their number and credit. It is a great thing that he was able so to order the pure imaginations of a child, that without altering or wresting them, he has thereby produced the most beautiful effects of a human soul. He presents it neither elevated nor rich, he only represents it sound, but certainly with a brisk and pure health. By these common and natural springs, by these vulgar and ordinary fancies, without being moved or provoked in the business, he drew up, not only the most regular, but the most high and vigorous beliefs, actions, and manners that ever were. It is he who brought again from heaven, where she lost time, human wisdom, to restore her to man, with whom her most just and greatest business lies. See him plead before his judges, do but observe by what reasons he rouses his courage to the hazards of war ; with what arguments he fortifies his patience against calumny, tyranny, death, and the perverseness of his wife : you will find nothing in all this borrowed from art and the sciences. The simplest may therefore discover their own means and power ; it is impossible to retire further, or to creep more low. He has done human nature a great favour in shewing how much it can do of itself.

Man incapable of moderation even with regard to science.

We are all of us richer than we think we are ; but we are taught to borrow and to beg, and brought up more to make use of what is another's than our own. Man can in nothing set bounds to his necessity. Of pleasure, wealth, and power, he grasps at more than he can hold ; his greediness is incapable of moderation. And I find, that in the curiosity of knowing



knowing he is the same; he cuts himself out more work than he can execute, and more than he needs to perform: extending the utility of knowledge as far as the matter. *Ut omnium rerum, sic literarum quoque, intemperantia laboramus*\*; “as of every thing else, we are intemperate in the pursuit of learning.” Tacitus had reason to commend the mother† of Agricola, for having restrained her son in his too violent appetite for learning.

It is a good, if duly considered, which has in it, as the other goods of men have, a great deal of vanity; and of proper and natural weakness, and which costs very dear; the acquisition of it is more hazardous than that of all other sustenance. For in other things, what we have bought, we carry home in some vessel, and there have liberty to examine the worth of it, how much and at what time we shall take it; but the sciences we can bestow into no other vessel than the soul; we swallow them in buying, and return from the market, either already infected, or amended. There are such sorts as only burthen and clog us instead of nourishing; and moreover, some that, under colour of curing, poison us. I have been pleased, in places where I have been, to see men through devotion make a vow of ignorance as well as chastity, poverty, and penitence. It is as it were a gelding of our unruly appetites to blunt this curiosity that spurs us on to the study of books; and to deprive the soul of this voluptuous complacency, that tickles us through our opinion of knowledge. It is fully accomplishing the vow of poverty to add unto it that also of the mind. We need not be taught to live at our ease. Socrates tells us, that the way how to attain to it, and the manner how to use it are in our power. All this sufficiency of ours, which exceeds the natural, is little better than superfluous and vain. It is much if it does not more encumber and plague us than do us good. *Paucis opus est literis ad mentem bonam*‡; “a man of a good disposition, has little need of learning.” It is a feverish

Learning is a dangerous acquisition. That which is of absolute use is in us by nature.

\* Senec. epist. 106.

† Senec. epist. 106.

‡ Tacit. in the life of Jul. Agricola, § 4.



excess of the mind ; a turbulent and restless tool. Do but look into yourself, and you will find there such natural arguments against death, as are true, and the most proper to serve you in necessity. They are such as make a peasant, and an entire people die with as much constancy as a philosopher. Would I have died less cheerfully before I had read Cicero's *Tusculanes* ? I believe not. And when I consider seriously, I perceive that my language is enriched indeed, but my courage little or nothing. It is just as nature forged it, and in any conflict, only defends itself in a natural and ordinary way. Books have not so much served me for instruction as for exercise. What if learning, trying to arm us with new defences against natural inconveniences, has more imprinted in our fancies the weight and greatness of them, than its reasons and subtilties to secure us from them ? They are subtilties indeed, with which it oft alarms us to little purpose. Do but observe, how many friivolous, and if nearly examined, how many immaterial arguments the most concise and the wisest authors scatter about one that is good. They are no other than quirks to deceive us. But as this may be with some profit, I will sift them no further. Enough of that sort are dispersed up and down, either by borrowing, or by imitation : therefore ought a man to take a little heed, not to call that force which is only civility, nor that solid which is only sharp, or that good which is only fair. *Quæ magis gustata quam potata delectant* \* ; “ which more delight the palate than “ the stomach. Every thing that flatters does not feed.” *Ubi non ingenii, sed animi negotium agitur* † ; “ where the “ question is not about improving the wit, but the “ understanding.”

Seneca's great efforts in preparing for his death.

To see the bustle that Seneca makes to fortify himself against death, to see him so sweat and pant to harden and encourage himself, and bait so long upon this perch, would have lessened his reputation with me, had he not very bravely maintained it to the last. His so ardent and frequent agitations discover, that he was in himself hot and

\* *Tusc. lib. v. cap. 5.*

† *Senec. epist. 75.*



impetuous. *Magnus animus remissius loquitur, et securius: non est alius ingenio, alius animo color* \*; “ a great courage speaks more indifferently and more firmly; the mind and the heart are of the same livery.” He must be convinced at his own expence. And he in some sort discovers that he was hard pressed by his enemy.

Plutarch’s manner the more disdainful, and the more lax it is, is, in my opinion, the more manly and persuasive; I am apt to believe, that his soul had more certain and more regular motions. The one being more sharp, pricks and makes us start, and more touches the soul; the other being more solid, informs, establishes, and constantly supports us, and more touches the understanding. That extorts the judgment, this wins it. I have likewise seen other writings yet more reverenced than these, which in the representation of the conflict they maintain against the temptations of the flesh, depict them so sharp, so powerful and invincible, that we ourselves, who are of the dregs of the people, are as much to wonder at the strangeness and unknown force of their temptation, as at their resistance.

Plutarch is more loose in this point, and for that very reason more persuasive.

To what end do we so arm ourselves with these maxims of philosophy? let us look down upon the poor people that we see scattered upon the face of the earth; wholly intent upon their business; that neither know Aristotle nor Cato, example nor precept. Even from these nature every day extracts effects of constancy and patience, more pure and manly than those we so diligently study in the schools. How many do I ordinarily see, who slight poverty? How many that desire to die, or that do it without alarm or affliction? He that is now digging in my garden, has this morning buried his father or his son. The very names by which they call diseases sweeten and mollify the sharpness of

The resolution of the vulgar in facing the most fatal accidents of life and even death itself, more instructive than the lectures of the philosophers.

\* Sen. Epist. 114, 115.



them. The phthysic is with them but a cough, the bloody-flux but a looseness, a pleurisy but a stitch, and as they gently name them, so they patiently endure them. They are grievous indeed, when they hinder their ordinary labour; and they never keep their beds but to die. *Simplex illa, et aperta virtus in obscuram, et solertem scientiam versa est* \*; “that plain and simple virtue is converted into an obscure and cunning knowledge.”

Montaigne's account of the terrible calamities of the civil war in which he was involved.

I was writing this about the time when a heavy load of our intestine troubles lay with all its weight upon me for several months. I had the enemy at my door on one side, and the free-booters, worse enemies than they, on the other; *non armis sed vitiis certatur*; “I was attacked not by force of arms, but fraud;” by which I was exposed to all sorts of military injuries at once.

*Hostis adest dextrâ, lævâque ex parti timendus,  
Vicinoque malo terret utrumque latus* †.

On either hand an enemy alarms,  
And threatens both sides with destructive arms.

A monstrous war! other wars are bent against foreign nations, this against itself; and preys upon and destroys itself with its own poison. It is of so malignant and ruinous a nature, that it ruins itself with the rest; and with rage mangles and tears itself to pieces. We oftner see it waste itself, than through scarcity of any necessities, or by force of the enemy. All discipline thums it. It comes to compose sedition, and is itself full of it; aims to chastise disobedience, and itself gives the example; and, while employed for the defence of the laws, shares in rebellion against its own. What a condition are we in! our very physis is a plague.

\* Sen. Epist. 95.

† Ovid. de Ponto. lib. i. eleg. 3. ver. 57. 58.



*Nôtre mal s'empoisonne  
Du secours qu'on lui donne \*.*

Such is our fate, that our disease  
Our remedies do still increase.

*Exspirat magis, egrescitque medendo †.*

The physic makes us worse, and sicker still.

*Omnia fanda nefanda malo permista furore,  
Iustificam nobis mentem avertère deorum ‡.*

Right and wrong confounded in this war,  
Have robb'd us of the gods protecting care.

In the beginning of such popular maladies, a man may distinguish the sound from the sick ; but when they come to continue, as ours have done, the whole body is then infected from head to foot, and no part is free from corruption. For there is no air that men so greedily suck in, that diffuses itself so far, and that penetrates so deep as that of licentiousness. Our armies only subsist, and are kept together by the cement of foreigners ; for of French there is now no constant and regular body of an army to be made. What a shame it is ? there is scarce any discipline but what we learn from hired soldiers. As for our parts we conduct ourselves not at the discretion of the chief ||, but every one at his own ; the general has a harder task to perform within than he has without : the commander alone is obliged to follow the soldiers, to make court to them, to comply with their humours, to obey them, and in every other regard there is nothing in the armies but dissolution and licentiousness. It pleases me to observe how much pusillanimity and cowardice

\* Plutarch. † Virg. *Æneid*. lib. xii. ver. 46. ‡ Catullus  
Carm. 62, de Nuptiis Pelei et Thetidis, ver. 408. || Here the inge-  
nious Mr. Cotton quite mistook the sentiment of his author.



there is in ambition; by how abject and servile ways it must arrive at its end; but besides, it displeases me to see good and courteous natures, and that are capable of justice, every day corrupted in the management and command of this confusion. Long toleration begets habit, habit consent and imitation. We had souls mischievous enough, without spoiling those that were good and generous; so that if we hold on, there will scarce remain any with whom to intrust the weal of the state, in case fortune restore it to us.

*Hunc saltem everso juvenem succurrere seclo,  
Ne prohibete \*.*—————

Stay not the succour which we all implore,  
But let this *Youth* the sinking age restore †.

What is become of the old precept, "That soldiers ought to stand more in awe of their chief than of their enemy?" And that wonderful example, that an orchard

An orchard of ripe apples inclosed within the Roman camp, left untouched to the possessor.

being enclosed within the precincts of a camp of the *Roman* army, was at their decampment next day left entire to the owner, and not an apple, though ripe and delicious, pulled off? I could wish that our youth, instead of the time they spend in less useful travels, and less honourable studies, would bestow one half of that time in being eye-witnesses of naval exploits under some good commander of Malta, and the other half in observing the discipline of the Turkish armies, which is very different from and has many advantages over ours. One thing is, that

\* Virg. Geor. lib. i. v. 500.

† If I am not mistaken the person here meant by Montaigne is Henry of Bourbon, king of Navarre, who succeeded to the crown of France by the death of Henry III. not only saved the government, which he had assisted in the life-time of that prince, but rendered it more flourishing and formidable, than it had been for a long time.



our soldiers are become more licentious in expeditions, whereas theirs are more temperate, and kept more in awe. The thefts and insolencies committed upon the common people, which are only punished with the bastinado in peace, are capital in war. For an egg taken in Turkey without paying for it, fifty blows with a cudgel is the settled rate; for any thing else, how trivial soever, not necessary to nourishment, they are impaled, or beheaded without delay. I am astonished to read in the history of Selim, the most cruel conqueror that ever was, that when he subdued Egypt, the beautiful gardens about the city of Damascus being all open, (and in a conquered land, where his army encamped upon the very place) were left untouched by the hands of the soldiers, because they had not received the signal for plunder.

But is there any disease in a government so important, as ought to be purged with such a mortal drug? "No," says Favonius, "not so much as the tyrannical usurpation of a commonwealth." Plato likewise does not consent, that a man should violate the peace of his country to cure it; and by no means approves of a reformation that disturbs and hazards all, and that is purchased at the price of the subject's blood and ruin; determining it to be the duty of a patriot, in such a case, to let all alone, and only pray to God for his extraordinary assistance; and the philosopher seems to be angry with his great friend Bion, for having proceeded something after another manner. I was a Platonic in this point, before I knew there had ever been such a man as Plato in the world. And if this person ought absolutely to be rejected from our society; (he who, by the sincerity of his conscience, merited so much of the divine favour as to penetrate so far into the christian light, through the universal darkness wherein the world was involved in his time), I do not think it would well become us to suffer ourselves to be instructed by a heathen, what a great impiety it is, not to expect from God relief that is simply his own, and without our co-operation. I often doubt,

Whether any thing can warrant the commission of violence in a country, under pretence of correcting the abuses of its government.



whether, among so many men as tamper in such affairs, there is not to be found some one of so weak understanding as to have been really persuaded that he went towards reformation by the worst of deformations, and advanced towards his salvation by the most express causes which we know of most assured damnation; that by overthrowing government, magistracy, and the laws, in whose protection God has placed him, by inspiring fraternal minds with hatred, and parricide, and by calling devils and furies to his aid, he can assist the sacred liberty and justice of the divine law. Ambition, avarice, cruelty, and revenge, have not sufficient natural impetuosity; though we gloss them with the glorious titles of justice and devotion. There cannot a worse state of things be imagined, than where wickedness comes to be legitimate, and with the magistrates permission, puts on the cloak of virtue. *Nihil in speciem fallacius, quam prava religio, ubi deorum numen prætenditur sceleribus*\*; “nothing has “a more deceiving face than a false religion, where wickedness is cloaked with the name of the gods.” The most extreme injustice, according to Plato, is, when that which is unjust is reputed for just.

The pillage to which Montaigne was exposed on both sides.

The common people at that time suffered thereby very much, not present damages only,

—undique totis  
*Usque adco turbatur agris* †,—

So great disturbance reigns throughout the land.

But future too. The living were to suffer, and so were they who were yet unborn. They were robbed, as I was consequently, even of hopes; taking from them all they had, and robbed of the store laid up to live on for many years.

\* Tit. Livius, lib. xxxix. cap. 10.

† Virgil. Eleg. lib. 1. ver. 11.



*Quæ nequeunt secum ferre aut abducere, perdunt,  
Et cremat insontes turba scelestæ casas.  
Muris nulla fides, squalent populatibus agri\*.*

What they can't carry off they spoil and spurn,  
And the rude rabble harmless houses burn;  
Walls can't secure their masters, and the field  
Thro' woful waste does a vile prospect yield.

Besides this shock I suffered others. I underwent the inconveniencies that moderation brings along with it in such diseases. I was pilled on all hands, to the Gibelin I was a Guelph, and to the Guelph a Gibelin; some one of the poets in my study expresses this very well, but I know not where it is. The situation of my house, and my acquaintance with my neighbours, presented me with one face; my life and my actions with another. They did not form accusations against me, for they had no fault to find. I never brake the laws, and whoever would have questioned me, would have done himself a greater prejudice than me. They were only suspicions that were whispered about, which never want appearance in so confused a mixture, no more than envious or weak brains. I commonly myself lend a hand to the injurious presumptions that fortune scatters abroad against me, by a way I have ever had of evading to justify, excuse, and explain myself, conceiving that it were to refer my conscience to arbitration, to plead in its behalf; *Perspicuitas enim argumentatione elevatur* †; “for the perspicuity of a cause is clouded by argumentation.” And, as if every one saw as clearly into me as I do myself, instead of retiring from an accusation, I advance to meet it, and rather aggravate it by an ironical and scoffing confession, if I do not totally despise it, as a thing not worth my answer. But such as look upon this kind of behaviour as be-

\* Ovid. Trist. lib. iii. el. 10. ver. 65.  
lib. iii. cap. 4.

† Cicero de Nat. Deorum.



traying too haughty a confidence, have as little kindness for me as they who interpret it to be the weakness of an indefensible cause; namely the great ones, towards whom want of submission is a very great fault; they being rude to all justice that knows and feels itself, and is not submissive, humble, and suppliant. I have oft knocked my head against this pillar. So it is, that at what then befel me an ambitious man would have hanged himself, and a covetous one would have done the same. I have no manner of care of getting.

*Sit mihi, quod nunc est, etiam minus, ut mihi vivam  
Quod superest ævi, si quid superesse volunt Di\*.*

I only pray, that small estate which I  
Now have, may tarry with me till I die,  
And those few days which I have yet to live  
(If heav'n to me more days will please to give)  
I may enjoy myself.

But the losses that have befallen me by the injury of others, whether by theft or violence, go as near to my heart almost, as they would do to that of a man that was sick and tortured with avarice. The offence is, without comparison, more bitter than the loss. A thousand several sorts of mischiefs fell upon me one after another, which I could better have borne all at once.

I have already been considering to whom  
How he bore                      amongst my friends I might commit a  
his misfortune.                  helpless and decrepit old age; and having  
turned my eyes quite round, I found myself destitute.  
When a man falls at once from so great an height, it  
ought to be in the arms of a solid, vigorous, and fortunate  
friendship. Such are very rare, if there be any. At last I  
concluded that it was safest for me to trust to myself in my

\* Hor. lib. i. epist. 18. ver. 107.



greatest necessity; and if it should so fall out, that I should be but upon cold terms in fortune's favour, I would the more strenuously recommend me to my own, and look the better to myself. Men on all occasions throw themselves upon foreign assistances to spare their own, which are the only certain and sufficient aids they can arm themselves with. Every one runs elsewhere, and to the future, forasmuch as no one is arrived at himself. I was satisfied, that they were profitable inconveniences, as in the first place ill scholars are to be admonished with the rod, when reason will not do, as a crooked piece of wood is made strait by fire and straining. I have a great while preached to myself to stick close to my own concerns, and separate myself from the affairs of others; yet I am still turning my eyes aside. A bow, a kind word, or look from a great person tempts me; of which God knows how little scarcity there is in these days, and what they signify. I moreover, without wrinkling my forehead, hearken to the persuasions offered me, to draw me into some place of traffick, and so gently refuse it, as if I were half willing to be overcome. Now so untractable a spirit must be roughly treated, and this vessel which thus chops and cleaves, and is ready to fall to pieces, must have the hoops forced down with good sound strokes of a mallet. Secondly, this accident served me for exercise to prepare me for worse, if I, who both by the favour of fortune, and by the condition of my manners, hoped to be the last, should happen to be one of the first overtaken with this storm; instructing myself betimes, to restrain my way of life, and fit it for a new state. True liberty is to be able to do what a man will with himself. *Potentissimus est qui se abet in potestate* \*; "he is most potent, who has himself in his own power." In an ordinary and quiet time, a man is prepared for moderate and common accidents; but in the confusion wherein we have been for these thirty years, every Frenchman, whether in

\* Senec. ep. 75.



particular or in general, sees himself every hour upon the point of the total ruin of his fortune. By so much the more ought he to have his courage armed with the strongest and most vigorous provision. We are obliged to fortune, that we do not live in an effeminate, idle, and languishing age : some, who could never have been so by other means, will be made famous by their misfortunes. As I seldom read in histories of the confusions of other states, without regret that I was not present, the better to consider them, so my curiosity makes me in some sort please myself with seeing with my own eyes this notable spectacle of our public death, its form and symptoms ; and, since I could not retard it, am content to be destined to assist in it, and thereby to instruct myself. Thus do we manifestly covet to see, even in shadow, and the fables of theatres, the tragic representations of human fortune. It is not without compassion of what we hear ; but we please ourselves in having our resentment roused by the rarity of such lamentable events. Nothing tickles that does not pinch ; and good historians skip over calm narrations, as a stagnant water and dead sea, to be again upon the narrative of wars and seditions, which they know are most acceptable to the readers. I question whether or no I can handsomely confess at how mean a purchase of repose and tranquility, I have spent above half of my life in the ruin of my country. I am too patient of accidents that touch my property, and do not so much regard what they take from me, as what remains safe, at home and abroad. There is comfort in escaping, one while one, another while another, of those evils that are levelled at me too in the consequence, but at present reach only to others about us ; as also, that in matters of public interest, the more universally my affection is extended, the weaker it is. To which may be added, that it is but too true. *Tantum ex publicis malis sentimus, quantum ad privatas res pertinent* ; “ we are “ only so far sensible of public evils, as they respect our “ private affairs.” And that the health which we have lost was such, that itself is some comfort for the regret we ought to have. It was health, but not so much in comparison



parison with the sickness that has succeeded it. We are not fallen from any great height. The corruption and thievery which are in dignity and office, seem to me more insupportable. We do not take it so ill to be rifled in a wood as in a place of security. It was an universal juncture of particular members, corrupted in spite of one another, and the most of them with inveterate ulcers that neither required nor admitted of any cure. This shock therefore did really more animate than press me, by the assistance of my conscience, which was not only at peace within itself, but elevated, and I did not find any reason to complain of myself. Also, as God never sends evils any more than goods, absolutely unmixed, my health continued at that time longer than usual ; and, as I can do nothing without it, there are few things that I cannot do with it. It afforded me means to rouse up all my faculties, and to lay my hand before the wound, that would else perhaps have spread farther, and in my patience, I experienced, that I had made a stand against fortune ; and that it must be a great shock that could throw me out of the saddle. I do not say this to provoke her to attack me with more vigour ; I am her humble servant, and beg her pardon. Let her be satisfied in God's name. Am I not sensible of her assaults ? yes, certainly I am. But, as those who are possessed and oppressed with sorrow, may sometimes suffer themselves nevertheless by intervals to taste a little pleasure, and are sometimes seen to smile, so have I so much power over myself, as to make my ordinary condition quiet, and free from anxious thoughts ; but I suffer myself however by fits to be surprised with the stings of those unpleasing imaginations that assault me, whilst I am arming myself to drive them away, or at least to wrestle with them.

But the worst evil which befel me after all was this ; I was both without doors and within assaulted with a violent plague beyond all others : for, as sound constitutions are subject to the most grievous maladies, forasmuch as they are not to be forced but by such, so my very healthful air,

A genuine account of a fatal plague that happened at that time in the country where Montaigne lived.

where



where no contagion, though very near, in the memory of man, could ever take footing, happening to be corrupted, produced strange effects.

*Mista senum, et juvenum densantur funera, nullum  
Sava caput Proserpina fugit \*.*

Both age and youth promiscuous crowd the tomb;  
No mortal head can shun th' impending doom.

I had this pleasant condition to mortify me, that the sight of my house was frightful to me. Whatever I had there was without guard, and abandoned to the mercy of every one. I, who am of so hospitable a nature, was myself in very great distress for a retreat for my family; a distracted family, frightful both to its friends and itself, and filling every place with horror where it attempted to settle; being to shift its abode as soon as any one's finger began but to ake. All diseases are at such a time concluded to be the plague, and people do not give themselves leisure to examine them. The best on't is, that, according to the rules of art, in every danger that a man comes near, he must undergo a quarantain, in extreme dread of such distemper; your imagination all that while tormenting you at pleasure, and turning your health itself into a fever; yet would not all this have gone very near my heart, had I not sympathised with others sufferings, and being forced to serve six wretched months together as a guide to this caravan: For I carry my antitodes within myself, which are resolution and patience. The apprehension, which is particularly dreaded in this disease, little troubles me. And had I chosen to have caught it when alone, my flight had been more sprightly and farther off. It is a kind of death, which I do not think of the worst sort; it is usually short, stupid, without pain, and alleviated by the consideration

\* Horace, lib. i. ode 28. ver. 19.



that it is the lot of the public; a death without ceremony, without mourning, and without a crowd. But as to the people about us, the hundredth part of them could not be saved.

—*videas desertaque regna  
Pastorum, et longè saltus latèque vacantes\*.*

Deserted realms now may'st thou see of swains,  
And every where forsaken groves and plains.

In this place my best revenue is manual. What art hundred men plowed for me lay a long time fallow.

But then what example of resolution did we not see in the simplicity of all this people? every one generally renounced all care of life. The grapes, the principal revenue of the country, were left hanging in clusters upon the vines; every one indifferently preparing for, and expecting death, either to night or to-morrow, with a countenance and voice so far from fear, as if they had contracted with death in this necessity, and that it had been a universal and inevitable sentence. It is always such. But how few have the resolution of dying? The distance and difference of a few hours, and the sole consideration of company, renders the apprehension of it various to us. Do but observe these; by reason that they die in the same month, children, young people and old, they are no longer astonished at it, they lament no more. I saw some who were afraid of staying behind, as in a dreadful solitude, and seldom observed any other anxiety amongst them, than for their interment; they were troubled to see the dead bodies scattered about the fields at the mercy of beasts, which presently began to flock about them. How differing are

The fortitude  
of the common  
people in this  
general deso-  
lation.

\* Virgil. Geor. lib. iii. ver. 476.



Sepulture of  
the Neerites.

the fancies of men ! The Neerites, a nation subjected by Alexander, threw the bodies of their dead into the darkest parts of their woods, to be devoured there ; accounting that the only happy sepulture. Some, while they were in health, digged their own graves, and others laid them down in them whilst alive ; and a labourer of mine, in dying, with his hands and feet drew the earth upon him. Was not this tucking himself up to sleep at his ease ?

Roman soldiers suffocated with their own hands after the battle of Cannæ.

A bravery, in some sort, like that of the Roman soldiers, who, after the battle of Cannæ, were found suffocated with their heads thrust into holes in the earth, which they had made with their own hands. In short, a whole nation by usage was brought to a discipline nothing inferior to any studied and premeditated resolution.

Whether in the calamities of life we derive any great advantages from the instructions of science.

Most of the instructions of science, to encourage us, have in them more of show than of force, and of ornament than profit. We have abandoned nature, and will teach her what to do ; her who did so happily and so securely conduct us. And in the mean time, from the foot-steps of her instructions, and that little, which by the benefit of ignorance, remains of her image imprinted in the life of this rustic rout of unpolished men, science is constrained every day to borrow, to set a pattern, for her disciples, of constancy, tranquility, and innocence. It is pretty to see, that these which are so full of so much fine knowledge, should imitate this foolish simplicity, and that in the principle acts of virtue ; and that our wisdom must learn, even from the beasts, the most profitable instructions in the greatest and most necessary concerns of human life : as, how we are to live and die, manage our fortunes, love and bring up our children, and to maintain justice. A singular testimony of human infirmity, and that this reason we so handle at our pleasure, finding evermore some diversity and novelty, leaves with us no apparent trace of nature. Men have made such use of it, as perfumers do  
of



of oil; they have sophisticated it with so many argumentations and far-fetched discourses, that it is thereby become variable, and particular to every one of them, and has lost its proper, constant, and universal face. We must seek evidence of it from beasts not subject to favour, corruption, nor diversity of opinions. For it is indeed true, that even they themselves do not always go exactly in the path of nature, but where they swerve from it, it is so little, that you may always see the track; as horses that are led make several bounds and curvetts, but it is always at the length of the halter, and they still follow him that leads them; and as the hawk takes his flight, but still under the restraint of his cryance. *Exilia, tormenta, bella, morbos, naufragia, meditare, ut nullo sis malo Tyro*\*; “expect banishments, torture, wars, diseases, and shipwrecks, that thou may’st not be surprised by any disaster.” What good will this curiosity do us, to anticipate all the inconveniencies of human nature, and to prepare ourselves, with so much trouble, to meet even things, which perhaps will never befall us? *Puram passis tristitiam facit, pati posse*†; “it troubles men as much that they may possibly suffer, as if they really did.” Not only the blow, but the crack of the whip strikes us. Or like people in a fever, for it is certainly a fever, to go immediately and scourge yourself, because it may fall out, that fortune may one day make you undergo the lash; and to put on your furred gown at Midsummer, because you will stand in need of it at Christmas? Throw yourselves, say they, into the experience of all the evils, nay the worst that can possibly befall you; make the trial and there stand fast. On the contrary, the most easy, and most natural way would be to banish even the thoughts of them. They will not come soon enough, their true existence does not continue with us long enough, we must lengthen and extend them in thought; we must incorporate them in us before-hand, and there entertain them, as if they would not otherwise make a reasonable

\* Sen. epist. 91. et 107.

† Sen. epist. 74.



impression upon our senses. We shall find them heavy enough when they come, (says one of the leaders, not one of the tender, but of the most severe sects) in the mean time favour thyself, believe what pleases thee best\*. What good will it do thee to bespeak and anticipate thy ill fortune, to lose the present for fear of the future; and to make thyself at this instant miserable, because thou art to be so in time? These are his words. Learning indeed readily does us one good office, in instructing us exactly in the dimension of evils.

*Curis acuens mortalia corda †.*

Whetting human minds with needful care.

It were pity that any part of their bulk should escape our sense and knowledge.

Of what use  
is preparation  
for death.

It is certain, that, for the most part, preparation for death has administered more torment than the thing itself. It was of old truly said, and by a very judicious author, *minus afficit sensus fatigatio, quam cogitatio †*; "suffering afflicts the senses less than the apprehension of it." The thought of present death sometimes of itself animates us with a prompt resolution no longer to shun a thing that is utterly inevitable. Several gladiators have been known, who, after having fought timorously, have courageously entertained death, offering their throats to the enemies sword, and bidding them dispatch. The remote sight of future death requires a courage that is slow, and consequently hard to attain to. If you know not how to die, never trouble yourself; nature will fully instruct you upon the spot; she will exactly do that business for you, take you no care:

\* Seneca, ep. 13. & 98.

† Seneca,

† Virgil. Geo. lib. ii. ver. 183.



*Incertam frustra mortales funeris horam  
 Queritis, et qua sit mors aditura via :  
 Poena minor certam subito perferre ruinam,  
 Quod timeas, gravius sustinuisse diu \*.*

Mortals, in vain's your curiosity  
 To know the hour and death that you must die,  
 Better your fate strike with a sudden blow,  
 Than that you long should what you fear foreknow.

We trouble life with the care of death, and death with the care of life. The one vexes, the other frights us. It is not against death that we prepare, that is too momentary a thing; a quarter of an hour's suffering, without consequence, does not deserve particular precepts. To say truth, we prepare ourselves against the preparations of death. Philosophy enjoins, that we should always have death before our eyes, to foresee and consider it before the time; and then gives us rules and precautions to provide that this foresight and thought do us no harm: just so do physicians, who throw us into diseases, to the end they may have a subject for their drugs and their art. If we have not known how to live, it is injustice to teach us to die, and to make the end different from the rest of the life. If we have known how to live consistently and quietly, we shall know how to die so too. They may boast as much as they please, *Tota philosophorum vita, commentatio mortis est* †; "that the whole life of a philosopher is the meditation of death." But I fancy, that though it be the end, it is not the aim of life. It is its end, its extremity, but nevertheless not its object.

It ought to be to itself its own aim      The true aim  
 and design; its true study is to order,      of life.  
 govern, and suffer itself. In the number of many other

\* Propertius, lib. ii. eleg. 27ver. 1, 2.

† Cicero Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 30.



offices, which the general and principal chapter of knowing how to live comprehends, is the article of knowing how to die; and did not our fears give it weight, one of the lightest too.

Simple nature  
disposes us to die  
with a better  
grace than died  
Aristotle, &c.

To judge of them by the utility, and by the naked truth, the lessons of simplicity are not much inferior to those which learning teaches to the contrary. Men differ in sentiment and force, we must lead them to their own good, according to their capacities, and by various ways:

*Quo me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes* \*.

For as the tempest drives, I shape my course.

I never saw any countryman among my neighbours enter into the thought of what countenance and assurance he should pass over this last hour with; nature teaches him not to dream of death till he is dying; and then he does it with a better grace than Aristotle, upon whom death presses with a double weight, both of itself, and by so long a premeditation of it. Therefore it was the opinion of Cæsar, that the death which was the least thought of beforehand, was the easiest and the most happy. *Plus dolet quam necesse est, qui ante dolet quam necesse est* †; “he grieves more than is necessary, who grieves before it is necessary.” The bitterness of this imagination springs from our curiosity. Thus do we ever hinder ourselves, desiring to anticipate and over-rule natural prescriptions. It is only the learned doctors who dine worst, when in the best health, and knit their brows at the image of death. The common sort stand in need of no remedy or consolation, but just in the shock, and when the blow comes; and think no more of the matter than just what they endure. Is it not then, as we say, that the stupidity and want of apprehension in the vulgar gives them this

\* Hor. lib. i. epist. 1. ver. 15.

† Senec. epist. 88.



patience in present evils, and this profound thoughtlessness of future sinister accidents? Are their understandings, by being more gross and dull, less to be penetrated and moved? If it be so, let us henceforth, for God's sake, recommend stupidity, which so gently leads its disciples to the last favour we are promised from learning.

We have no want of good masters, who are interpreters of natural simplicity. Socrates shall be one: for, as I remember, he speaks something to this purpose, to the judges who sat upon his life. "I am afraid (gentlemen,) that if I intreat you not to put me to death, I shall involved myself in the charge of my accusers, which is, that I pretend to be wiser than others, as having some more secret knowledge of things that are above and below us. I know very well, that I have neither been familiar nor acquainted with death, nor have ever seen any person that has tried its qualities, from whom to inform myself. Such as fear it, suppose they know it; as for my part, I neither know what it is, nor what is done in the other world. Death is perhaps an indifferent thing; perhaps, a thing to be desired. It is nevertheless to be believed, if it be a transmigration from one place to another, that it is a bettering of one's condition, to go live with so many great persons deceased, and to be exempt from having any more to do with unjust and corrupt judges: if it be an annihilation of our being, it is yet a bettering of one's condition, to enter into a long and peaceable night. We find nothing more sweet in life than quiet repose, and profound sleep without dreams. The things that I know to be evil, such as to offend one's neighbour, and to disobey one's superior, whether it be God or man, I carefully avoid: such as I do not know whether they be good or evil, I cannot fear them. If I go hence to die, and leave you alive, the Gods only know whether it will go better either with you or me; wherefore, as to what concerns me, you may do as you shall think fit; but, according to my method giving just

Socrates's pleadings in Plato, where we are taught both by his doctrine and example to follow nature purely and simply.



“ and wholesome advice, I do affirm, that you will do  
 “ your consciences more right to set me at liberty, un-  
 “ less you see further into my cause than I do myself.  
 “ And judging according to my past actions, both pub-  
 “ lic and private, according to my intentions, and ac-  
 “ cording to the profit that so many of my fellow-citi-  
 “ zens, both old and young, daily reap from my conver-  
 “ sation, and the good I do to you all, you cannot duly  
 “ acquit yourselves towards my merit, but by ordering,  
 “ that, my poverty considered, I should be maintained  
 “ in the Prytaneum\*, at the public expence; a thing  
 “ that I have often known you with less reason grant to  
 “ others. Do not impute it to obstinacy or disdain, that  
 “ I do not, according to the custom, supplicate, and  
 “ endeavour to move you to compassion. I have both  
 “ friends and kindred; not being (as Homer says) begot-  
 “ ten of a block or of a stone, any more than others, that  
 “ are able to present themselves before you in tears and  
 “ mourning, and I have three desolate children to move  
 “ you to pity. But I should do a shame to your city, at  
 “ the age I am, and in the reputation of wisdom where-  
 “ in I now stand to appear in such an abject form. What  
 “ would men say of the other Athenians? I have always  
 “ admonished those who have frequented my lectures,  
 “ not to redeem their lives by an indecent action; and  
 “ in the wars of my country, at Amphipolis, Potidea,  
 “ Delia, and other expeditions where I have been, I have  
 “ effectually manifested how far I was from securing my  
 “ safety by my shame. I would moreover endanger your  
 “ duty, and tempt you to unhandsome things: For it is  
 “ not for my prayers to persuade you, but the pure and  
 “ solid arguments of justice. You have sworn to the  
 “ Gods to keep yourselves thus upright, and it would  
 “ seem as if I suspected, or would recriminate upon you,  
 “ should I not believe that there are Gods: and I would  
 “ give evidence against myself, not to believe in them  
 “ as I ought, by mistrusting their conduct, and not pure-  
 “ ly committing my affair into their hands. I entirely rely  
 “ upon them, and hold myself assured, they will do in

\* The public exchequer.



“ this what shall be most fit both for you and me. Good  
“ men, whether living or dead, have no reason to fear  
“ the Gods.”

Was this a childish pleading of a sublimity inconceivable, and was it unnecessary? Truly, he had very good reason to prefer it to that which the great orator Lyfias had penned for him; admirably couched indeed in the judiciary style, but unworthy of so noble a criminal. Did one suppliant word fall from the mouth of Socrates? Did that transcendent virtue strike sail in the height of its glory? Did his rich and powerful nature commit his defence to art, and, in his highest attempt did he renounce truth and simplicity, the ornaments of his speaking, to deck it with the embellishment of figures, and the equivocations of premeditated speech? He did very wisely, and like himself, not to corrupt the tenour of an incorrupt life, and to deface so sacred an image of the human form, for the sake of spinning out his decrepitude to one year longer, and to betray the immortal memory of that glorious end. He lived not to himself, but for an example to the world. Would it not have been a public damage, that he should have ended his life after a lazy and obscure manner? Doubtless, that careless and indifferent concern of his about death, very well deserved that posterity should have the more concern for it, which they also had. And there is nothing so just in justice, as what fortune ordained for his recommendation. For the Athenians abominated all those who had been the cause of his death to such a degree\*, that they avoided them as excommunicated persons, and looked upon every thing as polluted, that had been but touched by them; no one would wash with them in the baths; none would salute, or own acquaintance with them; so that at last, unable longer to support this public hatred they hanged themselves. If any one should think, that amongst so many other examples that I had to chuse out of the sayings of Socrates, for my present purpose, I have made an ill choice of this, and judge that this discourse is elevated above the common opinion: I must tell them that I

\* All this is exactly copied from Plutarch's treatise of envy and hatred.



have purposely done it; for I am of another opinion, and think it a discourse in rank and simplicity much behind and inferior to what it is commonly taken for. He represents with an inartificial boldness, and a childish security, the pure and first impression and ignorance of nature. For it is to be believed, that we have naturally a fear of pain, but not of death, for its own sake.

Death makes a part of our being, and is very beneficial to nature.

It is a part of being, and no less essential than living. To what end should nature have begot in us a hatred to it, and a horror of it, considering that it is of so great utility to her in maintaining the succession and vicissitude of her works? And that, in this universal republic, it serves more to birth and augmentation, than to destruction or ruin.

—*sic rerum summa novatur \**,  
*Mille animas una necata dedit †.*

The failing of one life, is the passage to a thousand others; nature has imprinted in beasts the care of themselves; and of their preservation. Nay, they proceed so far, as to fear the being worse, to avoid hitting or hurting themselves, and to be afraid of our haltering and beating them; accidents which are subject to their sense and experience; but that we should kill them they cannot fear, nor have they the faculty to imagine and conclude such a thing as death. Yea, it is said, that we see them not only chearfully undergo it, horses for the most part neighing, and swans singing when they die; nay, they moreover seek it at need, of which elephants have given many examples.

Beasts naturally solicitous of their preservation.

Socrates's way of speaking and living very different from ours.

But besides all this, is not the way of arguing which Socrates here makes use of, equally admirable, both for its simplicity and vehemence? Really, it is much more easy to speak like Aristotle, and to live like

\* Lucrēt. lib. ii. ver. 74. † I know not where Montaigne found these words, nor consequently what they signify in the original; but Montaigne immediately subjoins the sense he would have them bear.



**Cæsar**, than to speak and live as Socrates did. There lies the extreme degree of perfection and difficulty. Art cannot reach it. Now, our faculties are not so trained up. We do not try, we do not know them, we invest ourselves with those of others, and let our own lie idle. As some one may say of me, that I have here only made a nosegay of foreign flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the thread that ties them.

In earnest, I so far yield to the common opinion, that those borrowed ornaments accompany me, but I do not think that they totally cover and hide me; that

With what view Montaigne has charged his book with quotations.

is quite contrary to my design, who desire to make a shew of nothing but what is my own, and what is my own by nature : and could I have been sure of credit, I had at all adventures spoken purely alone. I load myself more and more every day beyond my purpose and first method, upon the account of idleness and the humour of the age. If it misbecomes me, as I believe it does, it is no matter, it may be of use to some other. Some quote Plato and Homer, who never saw either of them; and I also have taken passages far enough from their source. Having a thousand volumes about me in the place where I write, I can presently, without trouble or learning, borrow, if I please, from a dozen such scrap-gatherers as I am, authors that I do not much trouble myself with, to embellish this treatise of *Physiognomy*. There needs no more, but a preliminary epistle of the German model, to stuff me with quotations, and we, by that means, go a begging for the liquorish glory, to cheat the silly world. These lumber-pies of common places, wherewith so many furnish their studies, are of little use but to common subjects, and serve but for a shew, and not to direct us; a ridiculous fruit of learning, which Socrates so pleasantly discusses against Euthydemus. I have seen books composed of matters that were never either studied or understood; the authors committing to several of their learned friends, the examination of this and the other matter



to compile them ; contenting themselves for their share to have projected the design, and by their industry to have bound up this faggot of unknown provision ; the ink and paper at least are theirs. This is to buy or borrow a book, and not to make one ; it is to shew men, not that a man can make a book, but that, whereof they may be in doubt, he cannot make one. A president in my hearing boasted, that he had heaped up two hundred and odd common places in one of his judgments : in telling this, he deprived himself of the honour that had been attributed to him. In my opinion, a pusillanimous and absurd vanity for such a subject, and such a person. I do quite the contrary ; and amongst so many borrowed things, am glad if I can steal one, disguising and deforming it for some new service. At the hazard of having it said, that it is for want of understanding in its natural use, I give it some particular dress with my own hand, to the end it may not be so absolutely strange. These expose their thefts to view, and value themselves upon them. And also they have more credit with the laws than with me. We naturalists think that there is a great and incomparable preference in the honour of invention to that of quotation.

If I would have spoke by learning, I had spoke sooner ; I had writ in a time nearer to my studies, when I had more wit, and a better memory ; and would sooner have trusted to the vigour of that age than this, if I had intended to have professed writing. And what if this gracious favour which fortune has even now offered me upon the account of this work, had befallen me in such a time of my life, instead of this, wherein it is equally desirable to possess, and to lose ? Two of my acquaintance, great men in this faculty, have in my opinion, lost half, in refusing to publish at forty years old, and chusing to stay till threescore. Maturity has its defects

Old age unfit for writing of books. as well as verdure, and worse ; and old age is as unfit for this kind of business as for any other.

He who commits his decrepit age to the press, is a fool, if he think to squeeze any thing out thence that does not represent him deformed



formed with dotage and stupidity. Our understandings grow costive and thick as they grow old. I deliver my ignorance in pomp and plenty, and my learning scantily and poorly; the latter accidentally and accessorially, the former principally and expressly; and write purposely of nothing but nothing, nor of any science but that of inscience. I have chosen a time, when my life, which I am to give an account of, lies wholly before me; what remains of it holds more of death. And of my death only, should I then be as talkative as some are, I would moreover give notice at my departure.

Socrates was a perfect pattern of all great qualities: I am vexed that he had so deformed a body as it is said, and so unsuitable to the beauty of his soul, himself being so amorous, and so captivated

Socrates's deformity of body unsuitable to the beauty of his mind.

with beauty. Nature surely did him wrong. There is nothing more probable than a conformity and relation of the body to the soul. *Ipsi animi, magni refert, quali in corpore locati sint: multa enim è corpore existunt, quæ acuant mentem: multa qua obtundant*\*; “it is of great consequence in what bodies souls are placed, for many corporal qualities sharpen the mind, and many others blunt it.” This speaks of an unnatural ugliness and deformity of limbs: but we call that ill-favouredness also, which is an unseemliness at first sight, being principally lodged in the face, and which disgusts us by the complexion, a spot, a forbidding countenance, sometimes from some inexplicable cause, where the limbs are nevertheless of good symmetry and perfect. The deformity that clothed a very beautiful soul in Stephen la Boetius, was of this predicament. This superficial ugliness, which nevertheless is always the most imperious, is of least prejudice to the state of the mind, and of little certainty in the opinion of men. The other, which by a more proper name, is called a more substantial deformity, strikes deeper. Not every shoe of glossy leather,

\* Cicero Tusc. lib. i. cap. 33.



but every shoe neatly made, shews the true shape of the foot within it.

Socrates said of his deformity, that it denoted his soul to be as deformed, had he not corrected it by instruction; but, in saying so, I believe he did but jest, as his custom was, and never so excellent a soul made a jest of itself.

What the beauty  
of the body is,  
and how much  
to be esteemed.

I cannot repeat too often how great an esteem I have for beauty, that potent and advantageous quality. He called it a short tyranny, and Plato, the privilege of nature. We have nothing that excels it in reputation; it has the first place in the commerce of men; it presents itself to meet us, seduces and prepossesses our judgment with great authority and wonderful impression. Phryne had lost her cause, in the hands of an excellent advocate, if, by rending her robe, she had not corrupted her judges with the lustre of her beauty\*. And I find that Cyrus, Alexander, and Cæsar, the three masters of the world, never neglected beauty in their greatest affairs; no more did the first Scipio. The same word in Greek signifies *beautiful* and *good*, and the Holy Ghost oft calls those *good*, whom he means *beautiful*. I would willingly maintain the priority of things called good, according to the song, which Plato† calls a trivial one, taken out of some of the ancient poets; viz. health, beauty, and riches. Aristotle says, that Beautiful persons fit to command. the right of command appertains to the beautiful; and that when there are persons whose beauty resembles the images of the gods, veneration is likewise due to them. When one asked him‡ why people oftner and longer frequented the company of handsome persons? “The question,” said he, “is not to be asked by any but one that is blind.” The most and the greatest philosophers paid for their school-

\* Sextus Empiricus adversus Mathematicos, lib. xi. p. 65. Quintilian who reports the same passage ascribes to Phryne the invention of this expedient, whereby she gained the favour of her judges, Instit. Orator. lib. ii. cap. 15. but Athenæus gives the honour of gaining her cause to Hyperides. † Gorgias Plat. p. 309. ‡ Diogenes Laert. in the life of Aristotle, lib. v. § 2.



ing, and acquired wisdom by the favour and mediation of their beauty. Not only in the men that serve me, but also in the beasts, I consider beauty as little short of goodness.

Yet I fancy that the shape and make of a face, and those lineaments by which men guess at our tempers, and our future fortunes, is a thing that is not very directly and simply to be ranked in the

An advantageous physiognomy not directly founded on the fine features of the face.

class of beauty and deformity, no more than every good smell and serenity of air promises health, nor than every fog and stink does infection in a time of pestilence. Such as accuse ladies of contradicting their beauty by their manners, are not always in the right; for, in a face which is none of the best, there may be an air of honesty and fidelity: as, on the contrary, I have sometimes seen betwixt two lovely eyes, certain menaces of a dangerous and malignant nature. There are some physiognomies, that are favourable, so that in a crowd of victorious enemies, you would presently chuse, amongst men you never saw before, one rather than another, to whom to surrender, and with whom to trust your life, and yet not properly for the sake of his beauty.

A man's countenance is but a slender security, and yet is something to be regarded too: and if I were to lash men, I would most severely scourge the wicked

Whether any assurance may be derived from physiognomy.

ones, who belye and betray the promises that nature has planted in their foreheads. I would with great severity punish malice in a courteous aspect. It seems as if there were some happy and some unhappy faces; and I believe there is some art in distinguishing affable from silly faces, such as are stern from the rigid, the malicious from the pensive, the coy from the melancholic, and such other bordering qualities. There are beauties which are not only haughty, but sour; and others that are charming and also insipid. To prognosticate future adventures, is a thing that I shall leave undecided.

I have,



The precept of a conformity to nature of great importance, even with regard to the outward man.

I have, for my own part, as I have said elsewhere, simply and nakedly embraced this ancient rule, "that we should not fail to follow nature, and that the sovereign precept is to conform ourselves to her." I have not, as Socrates

did, corrected my natural temper by the force of reason, and have not in the least molested my inclination by art. I go on in my old way; I contend not. My two principal parts live of their own accord in peace and good intelligence, and my nurse's milk, thanks be to God, was tolerably wholesome and in a good state. Let me say this by the way, that I see a certain image of scholastic honesty, almost only in use amongst us, in greater esteem than it is really worth; a slave to precepts, and fettered with hope and fear. I would have it such, as that laws and religions should not make, but perfect and authorize it, such as has wherewith to support itself without help, such as is rooted in us by the seed of universal reason, and imprinted in every man by nature. That reason which reclaimed Socrates from his vicious bent, rendered him obedient to the gods, and the men of authority in his city; courageous in death, not because his soul was immortal, but because he is mortal. It is a doctrine ruinous to all government, and much more hurtful than ingenious and subtle, which persuades the people, that a religious belief is alone sufficient, and without morality, to satisfy the divine justice. Custom demonstrates to us a vast distinction betwixt devotion and conscience. I have a tolerable aspect, both in form and interpretation:

*Quid dixi habere me? Imo habui Chreme\*,  
Heu! tantum attriti corporis ossa vides†.*

Have, said I, Chremes? Now, alas! not so;  
But I had once, e'er I was brought so low.

\* Terentii Heaut. act. i. scen. 1. ver. 43.  
Montaigne quoted this line I know not.

† From whence  
and



and which makes a quite contrary appearance to that of Socrates.

It has oft befallen me, that upon the mere credit of my presence, and my very aspect, persons who had no manner of knowledge of me, have put a very great confidence in me, whether in their own affairs or mine : and I have in foreign parts obtained favours singular and uncommon ; but two instances, are perhaps worth particular relation. A certain person deliberated to surprise my house and me in it ; his artifice was, to come to my gate alone, and to be importunate to be let in : I knew him by name, and had reason to repose a confidence in him, as being my neighbour, and something related to me. I caused the gate to be opened to him, as I do to every one, and in he came, quite frightened, his horse panting, and all in a foam. He presently entertained me with this flim-flam : “ that  
 “ about half a league off, he had unluckily met with a  
 “ certain enemy of his, whom I also knew and had in-  
 “ deed heard of their quarrel ; that this enemy had  
 “ pursued him very hard ; that he therefore fled to my  
 “ gate for refuge ; and that he was in great trouble for  
 “ his followers, whom, he said, he concluded to be all  
 “ either dead or taken.” I innocently did my best to comfort, hearten, and refresh him. Presently after, came four or five of his soldiers, who presented themselves in the same countenance and affright to get in too, and after them more, and still more, very well mounted and armed, to the number of five and twenty or thirty, pretending that they had the enemy at their heels. This mystery began a little to awake my suspicion. I was not ignorant what an age I lived in, how much my house might be envied, and I had several examples of others of my acquaintance, who had met with such sort of guests. So it was, that knowing there was nothing to be got in having begun to do a courtesy, unless I went through with it, and as I could not disengage myself from them without spoiling all ; I chose the most natural and simple way, as I always do, and invited them  
 all

Two notable proofs of great advantage which Montaigne derived from his aspect.



all to come in. And in truth, I am very naturally **very** little inclined to suspicion and distrust. I willingly incline towards excuse, and the most favourable construction. I take men according to the common run, and do not believe there can be such perverse and unnatural inclinations, unless convinced by manifest evidence, more than I do monsters and miracles; I am moreover a man who willingly commit myself to fortune, and throw myself headlong into her arms; and have hitherto found more reason to applaud, than to condemn myself for it; having found her more solicitous of, and more a friend to my affairs, than I am myself. There are some actions in my life, wherein my conduct may justly be called difficult, or, if you please, prudent. Yet of those, supposing the third part to have been my own, doubtless the other two thirds were richly hers. We are, methinks, to blame, in that we do not enough trust heaven with our affairs, and challenge more from our own conduct than appertains to us. And therefore it is that our designs so oft miscarry. Heaven is displeased at the extent that we attribute to the prerogatives of human prudence in prejudice of its own, and abridges them the more we stretch them. The last comers kept themselves on horseback in my court-yard, whilst their leader was with me in the parlour, who would not have his horse set up in the stable, saying, he would immediately retire, as soon as he should have news of the rest of his men. He saw himself master of his enterprize, and nothing now remained but the execution. He has since several times said (for he was not ashamed to tell the story himself) that my countenance and freedom had snatched the treachery out of his hands. He again mounted his horse, his followers having continually their eyes intent upon him, to see when he would give the sign; very much astonished to see him march away and leave his prey behind him. Another time, relying upon I know not what truce, newly published in the army, I took a journey through a very fickle country. I had not rid far, before it got wind, and two or three parties of horse, from several places, were



were sent out to take me; one of them the third day overtook me, where I was charged by fifteen or twenty gentlemen in vizors, followed at a distance by a band of ragamuffins. Here was I surrounded and taken, drawn into the heart of a neighbouring forest, dismounted, robbed, my trunk rifled, my casket taken, and my horses and equipage divided amongst new masters. We had here a very long contest about my ransom, which they set so high, that it was plain I was not known to them. They were moreover in a very great debate about my life; and in truth, there were several alarming circumstances that threatened me with the danger I was then in.

*Tunc animis opus, Ænea, tunc pectore firmo\*.*

Then, then, Æneas, was there need  
Of an undaunted heart indeed.

I still insisted upon the letter of the truce, that they should only have the gain of what they had already taken from me, which was not to be despised, without promise of any other ransom. After we had been two or three hours in this place, and after they had mounted me on a pitiful jade that was not likely to run away from them, and committed me to the guard of fifteen or twenty harquebusiers, and dispersed my servants to others, having given order that they should carry us off prisoners several ways; when I was got some two or three musquet-shot from the place,

*Jam prece Pollucis, jam Castoris implorata †;*

Whilst I implor'd Castor and Pollux aid †.

this sudden and unexpected alteration happened. I saw the chief of them return to me with milder language, making search amongst the troopers for my lost bag-

\* Virgil. *Æneid.* lib. vi. ver. 261.

† Catullus, lib. xvi. ver. 63.

‡ Or as Montaigne might have said in his own language: after I had made a vow to all the saints in Paradise, or (as we protestants say, in the Romish Calendar.



gage, and causing as much as could be recovered to be restored to me, even to my casket: but the best present they made me, was my liberty; for the rest did not much concern me at that time. The true cause of so sudden a change, and of this second thought, without any apparent impulse, and of so miraculous a repentance, at such a time, in a serious and deliberate enterprise, and which was become just by custom, (for at the first dash I plainly confessed to them, of what party I was, and whither I was going) is what I do not yet rightly apprehend. The most eminent amongst them, who pulled off his vizor, and told me his name, said to me over and over again, that I was obliged for my deliverance to my countenance, and the frankness and courage of my speech, which rendered me unworthy of such a misfortune, and he desired me to be in no dread of the like again. It is possible that the divine Bounty chose to make use of this mean instrument for my preservation. It moreover defended me the next day from other and worse ambushes, which even these had given me warning of. The last of these two gentlemen is yet living, to give an account of the story; the first was killed not long ago.

The simplicity of his intention which was visible in his eyes, and his language, prevented his freedom in discourse from being resented.

If my face did not answer for me, if men did not read in my eyes and words, the innocence of my intention, I had not lived so long without quarrels, and without giving offence, considering the indiscrete liberty I take, right or wrong, to say whatever comes into my head, and to judge rashly of things. This practice may with reason appear uncivil, and ill-adapted to our way of conversation; but I have never met with any who have judged it outrageous or malicious, or that took offence at my liberty, if he had it from my own lips. Words repeated have another kind of sense, as well as sound. Neither do I hate any person whatever; and am so slow to offend that I cannot do it, to serve reason itself. And when occasion has called me to condemn criminals, I have rather failed in the strictness of justice. *Ut magis peccari nolim, quam*



*quam satis animi ad vindicanda peccata habeam*; “so that  
 “I have more concern for men’s offences, than a heart to  
 punish them \*. Aristotle, it is said, was  
 reproached for having been too merciful Aristotle re-  
proached for  
being merciful.  
 to a wicked man †. “I was indeed,  
 “said he, merciful to the man, but not to  
 “his wickedness.” Ordinary judgments are exasperated to  
 punishment by the horror of the crime. But this cools  
 mine. The horror of the first murder makes me fear  
 the second, and the deformity of the first cruelty makes  
 me abhor all imitation of it. That may be applied to  
 me, who am but a knave of clubs, which was said of  
 Charillus king of Sparta ‡, “he cannot be good, be-  
 “cause he is not severe to the wicked. Or thus; for  
 Plutarch delivers it both these ways, as he does a thou-  
 sand other things, variously, and contrary to one another.  
 “He must needs be good, because he is so even to the  
 “wicked §.” Even as in lawful actions, I do not care to  
 be concerned when others are offended by them; so to  
 say the truth, in lawful things, I do not make conscience  
 enough of employing myself when others approve them.

## C H A P. XIII.

## Of Experience.

**T**HERE is no desire more natural  
 than that of knowledge: we try all  
 e ways that can lead us to it; where  
 th son is wanting, we therein employ ex-  
 perience;

Why experi-  
 ence is not a  
 sure means to  
 inform us of  
 the truth of  
 things.

\* Titus Livius lib. xxix. cap. 25. † Diog. Laert. in the life of  
 Aristotle, lib. v. sect. 17. ‡ Plutarch, of the Difference betwixt the  
 Flatterer and the Friend, chap. 10. § I cannot imagine from  
 which of Plutarch’s tracts Montaigne took this reflection; but in the  
 treatise of Envy and Hatred Plutarch gives it us exactly as it is in the  
 preceding note, viz. “How should he be good, when he is not rigid to  
 “the wicked,” chap. 3.



*Per varios usus artem experientia fecit,  
Exemplo monstrante viam\*.*

By various proofs experience art has form'd,  
Example being guide.

which is a means much more weak and cheap. But truth is so great a thing, that we ought not to disdain any medium that will guide us to it. Reason has so many forms, that we know not which to adhere to; experience has no fewer. The consequence we would draw from the comparison of events is uncertain, by reason they are always unlike. There is no quality so universal in this image of things as diversity and variety. The Greeks, the Latins, and we, for the most express example of similitude, have pitched upon that of eggs. And yet there have been men, particularly one at Delphos, who could distinguish marks of difference amongst eggs so well, that he never mistook one for another; and, having many hens, could tell which had laid it †. Dissimilitude intrudes itself into our works; no art can arrive at a perfect similitude. Neither Perozet, nor any other card-maker, can so carefully polish and blanch the backs of his cards, that some gamesters will not distinguish them by only seeing them shuffled by another: resemblance does not so much make one, as difference makes another. Nature has obliged herself to make nothing like to another.

Of what use  
is the multi-  
plicity of  
laws.

And yet I am not much pleased with his opinion, who thought by the multitude of laws to curb the authority of judges, by retrenching them. He was not aware that there is as much latitude in the interpretation of laws, as in their form; and they deceive themselves, who think to lessen and stop our debates by summoning

\* Manilius, lib. i. ver. 61.  
cap. 18.

† Cicero Acad. Quæst. lib. iv.



us to the exprefs words of the Bible: fince human wit finds as large a field for controverting the fenfe of another, as for delivering his own; and, as if there were lefs animofity and bitternefs in gloffing than inventing. We fee how much he was deceived; for we have more laws in France, than in all the reft of the world befides; and more than would be neceffary for the regulation of all the worlds of Epicurus. *Ut olim flagitiis, fic nunc legibus laboramus*\*: “fo that as formerly we were “plagued with vices, we are now as fick of the laws:” yet we have left fo much to the opinion and decifion of our judges, that there never was fo full and uncontrolled a liberty. What have our legislators got by culling out an hundred thoufand particular cafes, and facts, and by adding to thofe, an hundred thoufand laws? This number holds no manner of proportion with the infinite diversity of human actions; the multiplications of our invention will never reach the variety of examples. Add to them an hundred times as many more, yet it will never happen, that of events to come, any one will fall out, that, in the millions of events fo chofen and recorded, fhall fo tally with any one, and be fo exactly coupled and compared with it, that there will not remain fome circumftance and diversity which will require a variation of judgment. There is little relation betwixt our actions that are in perpetual mutation, and the laws that are fixt and immoveable; the moft to be defired, are thofe which are the moft rare, the moft fimple, and general: and I am further of opinion, that we were better to have none at all, than to have them fo numerous.

Nature always gives them better, than thofe are which we make ourfelves; witnefs the picture of the poets golden age, and the ftate wherein we fee nations live, who have no other. Some there are, who, for their only judge, take the firft paffer by that travels along their mountains, to determine their caufe: and others, who, on their market-day, chufe

The laws of nature better than our own.

Passengers made use of for judges.

\* Tacit. lib. iij. cap. 25.



out some one amongst them, who decides all their controversies on the spot. What danger would there be, if the wisest should thus determine ours, according to occurrences, and by sight, without obligation of example and consequence? Every shoe to his own foot. When king Ferdinand sent colonies to the Indies, he wisely provided that they should not carry along with them any students of the long robe, lest law-suits should get footing in that new world; as being a science, in its own nature, the mother of altercation and division; judging with Plato, that lawyers and physicians are the pests of a country\*.

How it comes to pass, that the vulgar tongue, which serves for every other purpose, becomes obscure and ambiguous in covenants and testaments.

How comes it to pass that our common language, so easy for all other uses, becomes obscure, and unintelligible in wills and contracts? And that he who so clearly expresses himself, whatever he speaks or writes, cannot find in this any way of declaring himself which is not liable to doubt and contradiction? If it be not, that the great men of this art, applying themselves with peculiar attention to cull out hard words, and form artful clauses, have so weighed every syllable, and so thoroughly sifted every sort of connection, that they are now confounded and intangled in the infinity of figures, and so many minute divisions, that they can no longer be liable to any rule or prescription, nor any certain intelligence. *Confusum est quicquid usque in pulverem sectum est*†; “whatever is beaten into powder is confused.” As you have seen children try to bring a mass of quicksilver into a certain number of parts, the more they press and work it, and endeavour to reduce it to their own will, the more they irritate the liberty of this generous metal; it baffles their art, and subdivides and sparkles itself into so many separate bodies, as are innumerable; so it is here; for in subdividing these subtilties, men are apt to encrease their doubts, they are led into a way of stretching

\* De Republ. lib. iii. p. 621.

† Sen. epist. 79.



and diversifying difficulties, which are lengthened and dispersed. By starting and splitting of questions, they make the world fructify and abound in uncertainties and disputes; as the earth is made fertile, the deeper it is ploughed and the more it is harrowed. *Difficultatem facit doctrina*; "doctrine begets difficulty." We doubted of Ulpian, and are now more perplexed with Bartolus and Baldus. We should blot out the trace of this innumerable diversity of opinions, not adorn ourselves with it, and intoxicate posterity. I know not what to say to it, but experience makes it manifest, that so many interpretations divide truth, and mar it. Aristotle writ to be understood, which if he could not be, much less will another that is not so good at it; and a third than he who expressed his own thoughts. We open the matter, and spill it in pouring out. Of one subject we make a thousand, and in multiplying and subdividing them, relapse into the infinity of the atoms of Epicurus. Never did two men make the same judgment of the same thing; and it is impossible to find two opinions exactly alike, not only in several men, but in the same men, at different times. I oft find matter of doubt, of things which the commentary disdains to take notice of. I am most apt to stumble on even ground, like some horses that I have known, which make most trips in the smoothest way.

Who will not say that glosses augment doubts and ignorance, since there is no one book to be found, either human or divine, which the world busies itself about, whose difficulties are cleared by interpretation. The hundredth commentator still refers you to the next, more knotty and perplexed than he. When were we ever agreed amongst ourselves, that a book had enough, and that there was no more to be said on the subject? This is most apparent in the law pleadings. We give the authority of law to innumerable doctors, *arretis ad infinitum*, and to as many interpretations; yet do we find any end of the necessity of interpreting? Is there for

Glosses and commentaries only serve to obscure the text, and especially that of the books of the law.



all that any progress or advancement towards tranquillity; or do we stand in need of any fewer advocates and judges, than when this mass of law was yet in its infancy? We, on the contrary, obscure and bury the sense of it. We discover no more of it than what so many inclosures and barriers will permit. Men are not sensible of the natural disease of the mind. It does nothing but ferret and enquire, and is eternally wheeling, plodding and perplexing itself; and like the silk-worm, suffocates itself in its own web; or like *mus in pice*, “a mouse in a tar-barrel, which the more it struggles to “get out, is the more entangled.” It thinks it discovers at a great distance I know not what glimpse of imaginary light and truth; but whilst it runs to it, so many difficulties, hindrances, and new inquiries cross its way, as mislead and intoxicate it. Not much unlike Æsop’s dog, that seeing something like a dead body floating in the sea, and not being able to approach it, attempted to drink the water, in order to lay the passage dry, and so drowned itself. To which tallies, what one Crates \* said of the writings of Heraclitus, “that they required a reader who could swim “well, that the depth and weight of his doctrine might “not overwhelm and choak him †. It is nothing but particular weakness that makes us content ourselves with what others, or ourselves have found out in this pursuit of knowledge; those of better understanding would not rest so content; there is always room and to spare for one to succeed, nay even for ourselves, and every one else; there is no end of our inquiries, our end is in the other world. It is a sign either of a contracted mind when it is satisfied, or that it is grown weary. No generous mind stops of itself; it always pushes on, and beyond its power; it has fallies beyond its compass. If it do not advance and press forward, and fall back, rush, turn and wheel about, it is but

\* According to Diogenes Laert. lib. ii. sect. 22. this was not Crates, but Socrates, who said of the writings of Heraclitus, that they had need of as excellent divers as any in the isle of Delos.

† Suidas in *Ανάλειξις* πολυμυβία.



sprightly by halves ; its pursuits are without bound or  
 method ; its aliment is admiration, ambiguity the chace ;  
 which Apollo plainly declared, by always speaking to us  
 in a double, obscure, and oblique sense ; not feeding, but  
 amusing and puzzling us. It is an irregular and per-  
 petual motion, without example and without aim. Its  
 inventions heat, pursue, and introduce one another.

*Ainsi voit-on en un ruisseau coulant,  
Sans fin l'une eau, apres l'autre roulant ;  
Et tout de rang, d'un eternel conduit,  
L'une fuit l'autre, & l'une l'autre fuit.  
Par cette-cy, celle-là est poussée,  
Et cette-cy par l'autre est devancée :  
Tousiours l'eau va dans l'eau, & tousiours est-ce  
Mesme ruisseau, & tousiours eau diverse.*

So in a running stream where currents play,  
Successive waves still urge their liquid way,  
And as they swiftly glide along the shore,  
Each presses to o’ertake what’s gone before.  
By this that’s evermore push’d on, and this  
By that continually preceded is ;  
In the same course the river ceaseless flows,  
But still new waves the varied mass compose.

There is more ado to interpret interpretations than things, and more books upon books than upon any other subject; we do nothing but comment upon one another. Every place swarms with commentaries; but of authors there is great scarcity. Is it not the principal and most reputed knowledge of our times to understand the learned? Is it not the common and final aim of all studies? Our opinions are grafted upon one another; the first serves for a stock to the second, the second to the third, thus step by step we climb the ladder. From whence it comes to pass, that he who is mounted highest has oft more honour than merit; for he is got up but a



grain upon the shoulders of the last but one. How oft, and perhaps how foolishly, have I stretched my book, to make it speak of itself? Foolishly, if for no other reason but this, that I ought to call to mind what I say of others who do the same; that the fond looks they so often cast upon their works, witness that their hearts pant with self-love, and that even the disdainful reproaches wherewith they lash them, are no other than the dissembled caresses of a maternal kindness; according to Aristotle, whose valuing and undervaluing himself, frequently spring from the same air of arrogance: I urge for my excuse, that I ought in this to have more liberty than others, because I purposely treat of myself and of my writings, as I do of my other actions; but though my theme turn upon itself, I know not whether or no every one else will take such liberty.

Our disputes  
are endless, and  
most of them  
about words.

I have observed in Germany, that Luther has left as many and more divisions and disputes behind him, about the doubt of his opinions, than he himself raised about the holy scriptures. Our contest is verbal. I demand what nature is, what pleasure, circle and substitution are? The question is about words, and is answered in the same coin. A stone is a body, but if a man should further urge, and what is a body? Substance; and what is substance? and so on\*, he would drive the respondent to the end of his dictionary. We exchange one word for another, and often for one less understood. I better know what man is, than I know what animal is, or mortal, or rational. To satisfy one doubt, they give me ground for three; it is the Hydra's head. Socrates † asked Menon what virtue was; "there is, says Menon, the virtue of a man and of a woman, of a magistrate and of

\* We need go no farther, than the English philosopher Locke, famous for his penetration and the incomparable rectitude of his judgment, who has plainly shewn, that we have no clear, exact idea of what we call substance, lib. i. chap. 4. sect. 10. and lib. ii. chap. 13. sect. 2, &c. of his Essay on the Human Understanding.

† Plato, in Menone, p. 409.



“ a private person, of an old man, and of a child. Very well, says Socrates, we were in quest of one virtue, and thou hast brought us a swarm; we put one question, and thou returnest a whole hive.” As no event, nor no form entirely resembles another; so there is not one that entirely differs from another; such is the ingenious mixture of nature. If our faces were not alike, we could not distinguish man from beast; if they were not unlike, we could not distinguish one man from another. All things hold by some similitude, every example halts. And the relation which is drawn from experience is always faulty and imperfect; comparisons are always coupled at one end or other; so do the laws serve, and are fitted to every one of our affairs by some wrested, biased, and forced interpretation.

Since the moral laws, that concern the particular duty of every one in himself, are so hard to be taught and observed, as we see they are; it is no wonder if those which govern so many particulars, are much more so. Do but consider the form of this justice that governs us, it is a true testimony of human weakness, so full it is of error and contradiction. What we find to be favour and severity in justice, (and we find so much of both, that I know not whether the medium is so often met with), are sickly parts, and unjust members of the very body and essence of justice. The country people come to bring me news, in great haste, that they just lost, in a forest of mine, a man with an hundred wounds upon him, who was yet breathing, and begged of them water for pity's sake, and help to raise him up; saying, they durst not come near him, but ran away, lest the officers of justice should catch them there; and for fear, as it falls out with those who are found near a murdered person, they should be called in question about this accident to their utter ruin, having neither money nor any means to defend their innocence. What should I have said to these people? It is certain that this office of humanity would have brought them into trouble.

Imperfection of the laws that concern the subjects of a state.

How



Known innocents punished in compliance to the forms of law.

How many innocents have we known that have been punished even without the judge's fault, and how many more are there that have not arrived at our knowledge? this case happened in my time, Certain men were condemned to die for a murder committed; and their sentence, if not pronounced, was at least determined and concluded on. The judges, just in the nick, are advertised by the officers of an inferior court hard by, that they have some men in custody, who have directly confessed the said murder, and give such light into the fact, as is not to be doubted. It was then notwithstanding put to the question, whether or no they ought to suspend execution of the sentence already passed upon the former. They considered the novelty of the example, and the consequence of staying judgments, that the sentence of death was duly passed, and the judges could not retract. To conclude, these poor devils were sacrificed to the forms of law. Philip, or some other, provided against a like inconvenience, after this manner. He had condemned a man to pay a great fine to another, by a determined judgment. The truth some time after being discovered, it appeared he had passed an unjust sentence; on one side was the reason of the cause, on the other side the reason of the judiciary forms. He in some sort satisfied both, leaving the sentence in the state it was, and out of his own purse paying the costs of the condemned party. But he had to do in a reparable affair, mine were irreparably hanged. How many sentences have I seen more criminal than the crimes?

The innocent man is not sure of his life or property, by putting himself into the hands of justice.

All this makes me remember the ancient opinions, “ that of necessity a man must do wrong by retail, who will do right in the gross; and injustice in little things, that will have it in his power to do justice in great: that human justice is formed after the model of physic, according to which, all that is useful, is also just and honest; and what is held by the Stoics, that nature herself proceeds con-

“ trary



contrary to justice in most of her works ;” and what is received by the Cyrenaics \*, “ that there is nothing just in itself, but that customs and laws make justice :” and what the Theodorians hold, who maintain theft, sacrilege, and all sorts of uncleanness just in a wise man †, if he knows them to be profitable to him ; there is no remedy, I am in the same case that Alcibiades was, that I will never, if I can help it, put myself into the hands of a man who shall determine of my head, where my life and honour shall more depend upon the care and diligence of my attorney, than upon my own innocence. I would venture myself with such a justice as would take notice of my good deeds as well as my ill, and where I had as much to hope as to fear. Indemnity is not sufficient satisfaction to a man who does better than not to do amiss ; but our justice presents us only one hand, and that the left hand too ; let him be who he will, he shall be sure to go off with loss.

In China, of which kingdom the government and arts, without correspondence with, or knowledge of ours, surpass our best examples in several parts of excellence ; and of which the history gives me to understand how much greater and more various the world is, than either the ancients or we can penetrate, the officers deputed by the prince to visit the state of his provinces, as they punish those who behave themselves ill in their places, so do they liberally reward those who have carried themselves above the common sort, and beyond the necessity of their duty ; they there present themselves, not only to be protected, but to get ; not simply to be paid, but to be rewarded.

Judges established in China to reward good actions, as well as to punish the bad.

No judge, thanks be to God, ever yet spoke to me, in the quality of a judge, upon any cause whatever, whether my own, or that of another, whether criminal or civil ; nor was I ever within the walls of a prison. Imagination renders the very outside of a jail

Montaigne never had a suit in any court of justice.

\* Diog. Laert. in the life of Aristippus, lib. ii. § 92.

† Ibid. § 99.



my aversion : I am so fond of liberty, that should I be debarr'd access to any corner of the Indies, I would be somewhat uneasy. And whilst I can find either earth or air elsewhere, I shall never lurk, where I must hide myself. Good God ! how ill should I bear to be confined, as many people are, to a corner of the kingdom, deprived of the privilege of entering into the principal cities and courts, and the liberty of the public roads, for having quarrell'd with our laws. If those under which I live, should but wag a finger at me, by way of menace, I would immediately go seek out others, let them be where they would ; all my little prudence in the civil war wherein we are now engaged, is employed, that they may not hinder my egress and regress.

What it was  
that in Mon-  
taigne's time  
kept up the cre-  
dit of the  
French laws,  
in other re-  
spects very un-  
reasonable.

Now the laws keep up their credit, not for being just, but because they are laws : it is the mystical and the sole foundation of their authority ; and it is well it is so ; they being oft made by fools ; for the most part by men that out of hatred to equality, fail in equity ; but always by men who are vain and fickle authors.

There is nothing so grossly, nor so commonly faulty as the laws. Whoever obeys them because they are just, does not justly obey them as he ought. Our French laws, by their irregularity and deformity, in some sort lend a helping hand to disorder and corruption, as is manifest in their dispensation and execution. The command is so perplexed and inconstant, that it in some measure excuses both disobedience, and the vice of the interpretation, the administration and the observation of it. What fruit then soever we may reap from experience, will be of little service to our instruction, which we draw from foreign examples ; if we make so little profit of that we have of our own, which is more familiar to us, and doubtless sufficient to instruct us in that whereof we have absolute need. I study myself more than any other subject ; this is my metaphysic, this my natural philosophy.



*Quâ Deus hanc mundi temperet arte domum,  
 Qua venit exorians, quâ deficit, unde coactis \*  
 Cornibus in plenum menstrua luna edit:  
 Unde salo superant venti, quid flamine captes  
 Eurus, et in nubes unde perennis uqua.  
 Sit ventura dies mundi quæ subruat arces:  
 Quærite, quos agitat mundi labor †.*

By what means God the universe does sway,  
 Or how the pale-fac'd sister of the day,  
 When, in encreasing, can her horns unite;  
 Till they contract into a full orb'd light;  
 Why ocean of the winds the better get,  
 Why Eurus blows, and clouds are always wet;  
 What day the world's great fabric must overthrow,  
 Let them enquire, who would its secrets know.

In this university, I suffer myself to be ignorantly and negligently led by the general law of the world. I shall know it well enough when I feel it; my learning cannot make it alter its course; it will not change itself for me; it is folly to hope it, and a greater folly to concern a man's self about it, seeing it is necessarily alike, public and common. The bounty and capacity of the governor most absolutely discharge us of all care of the government. Philosophical inquiries and contemplations serve for no other use but to feed our curiosity. Philosophers, with great reason, refer us to the rules of nature; but they have no need of so sublime a knowledge: they falsify them, and present us with nature's face painted with too high-coloured and too adulterate a complexion, from whence spring so many different pictures of so uniform a subject. As she has given us feet to walk with, so has she given us prudence to guide us in life; not such an ingenious, robust, and majestic prudence as that of their invention, but yet one that is easy, quiet and

\* Prop. lib. iii. eleg. 5. ver. 25, &c.

† Lucan. lib. i. ver. 417.



salutary ; and such very well performs what the other promises, in him who has the good luck to know how to employ it sincerely and regularly, that is to say, according to nature. The most simply to commit a man's self to nature, is to do it the most wisely. Oh what a soft, easy, and wholesome pillow is ignorance and incuriosity, whereon to repose a well turned head ! I had rather understand myself well in myself, than in Cicero. Of the experience I have of myself, I find enough to make me wise, if I were but a good scholar. Whoever calls to mind the excess of his past anger, and to what a degree that fever transports him, sees the deformity of this passion better than in Aristotle, and conceives a more just hatred against it. Whoever remembers the hazards he has run, those that threatened him, and the flight occasions that have removed him from one state to another, does by that prepare himself for future changes, and the acknowledgment of his condition. The life of Cæsar himself is no more exemplary for us than our own, and though it was popular and commanding, it was still a life liable to all human accidents. Let us but listen to it, and we apply to ourselves all whereof we have principal need. Whoever calls to memory, how many times he has been mistaken in his own judgment, is he not a great fool if he does not ever after suspect it ? When I find myself convinced, by another's reason, of a false opinion, I do not so much learn what he has said to me that is new, which particular ignorance would be no great purchase, as I do in general my own weakness, and the treachery of my understanding, from whence I extract the reformation of the whole mass. In all my other errors I do the same, and find this rule greatly beneficial to life. I regard not the species and individual, as a stone that I have stumbled at ; I learn to suspect my steps every-where, and am careful to place them right. To learn that a man has said or done a foolish thing, is a thing of no moment. A man must learn that he is nothing but a fool, a much more ample and important instruction. The false steps that my memory has so often betrayed me into, even then when it was most secure  
of



of itself, are not idly thrown away ; it may now swear to me, and assure me as much as it will, I shake my head, and dare not trust it ; the first opposition that is made to my testimony, puts me in suspense ; and I durst not rely upon it in any thing of moment, nor warrant it in another person's concerns : and were it not that what I do for want of memory, others do more often for want of sincerity, I would always in matter of fact, rather choose to take truth from another's mouth than my own. If every one did but watch the effects and circumstances of the passions that sway him, as I have done that which I am most subject to, he would see them coming, and would a little break their impetuosity and career ; they do not always seize us on a sudden, there are threatenings, and degrees.

*Fluctus uti primo cœpit cùm albescere vento,  
Paulatim sese tollit mare, et altiùs undas  
Erigit, inde imo consurgit ad æthera fundo\*.*

As the sea first begins to foam and fret,  
Thence higher swells, higher, and higher yet,  
Till at the last so high the billows rise,  
They seem to bid defiance to the skies.

Judgment holds in me a magisterial seat ; at least, it carefully endeavours to make it so : it lets my appetites take their own course ; as hatred and friendship ; nay, even that which I bear to myself, without suffering alteration and corruption. If it cannot reform the other parts according to its own model, at least it suffers not itself to be corrupted by them, but plays its game apart. That admonition to every one to know themselves, ought to be of important effect, since the God of wisdom and light caused it to be written on the front of his temple, as compre-

\* Virgil. *Æneid*. lib. vii. ver. 528, &c.



hending all he had to advise us. Plato says also, that prudence is nothing but the execution of this ordinance; and Socrates verifies it by piece-meal in Xenophon. The difficulties and obscurity are not discerned in any science, but by those that are got into it; for a certain degree of understanding is requisite to be able to know that a man is ignorant: and we must push at a door to know whether it be bolted against us. From hence this Platonic subtilty springs, that neither they who know are to enquire, forasmuch as they know; nor they who do not know, forasmuch as to enquire, they must know what they enquire of. So in this of knowing a man's self, that which every man is seen so resolved and satisfied in with himself, and that which every man thinks he sufficiently understands, signifies, that every one understands nothing at all of the matter: as Socrates tells Euthydemus. I who profess nothing else, therein find so infinite a depth and variety, that all the fruit I have reaped from my learning, serves only to make me sensible how much I have to learn. To my weakness, so often confessed, I owe the propensity I have to modesty, my assent to the articles of belief imposed upon me, a constant faintness and moderation in my opinions, and a hatred of that troublesome and wrangling arrogance, wholly believing and trusting in itself, the capital enemy of discipline and truth. Do but hear how they advance and domineer; the first fooleries they utter, are in the style wherewith men establish religion and laws. *Nihil est turpius quam cognitioni et perceptioni assertionem, approbationemque præcurrere*\*; "nothing is more absurd than that assertion and approbation should precede knowledge and perception." Aristarchus said that anciently there was scarce seven wise men to be found in the world, and in his time scarce so many fools. Have not we more reason than he to say so in this age? affirmation, and obstinacy, are express signs of stupidity. If a fellow has stumbled and had a hundred falls in a day, yet he will be at his ergo's

\* Cicero Acad. lib. i. cap. 12.



as resolute and sturdy, as before; so that one would conclude he had had some new soul and vigour of understanding infused into him; and that it happened to him as it did to that ancient son of Tellus, who took fresh courage, and was made stronger by his fall.

———*cui cùm tetigere parentem,  
Jam defecta vigent renovato robore membra* \*.

Whose broken limbs upon his mother laid,  
Immediately new force and vigour had.

Does not this incorrigible coxcomb think that he assumes a new understanding, by undertaking a new dispute? I accuse human ignorance by my own experience, which is in my opinion the world's best school-master. Such as will not conclude it so in themselves, by so vain an example as mine, or their own, let them believe it from Socrates, the master of masters. For the philosopher Antisthenes said to his disciples: "Let us go, and hear Socrates, I will be a pupil with you †." And maintaining this doctrine of his Stoical sect, that virtue was sufficient to make a life completely happy, he added, it had no need of any other thing whatever, except the vigour of Socrates. The long attention that I have employed in considering myself, also fits me to judge tolerably of others; and there are few things whereof I speak better, and more excusably. I happen very oft to see and distinguish the qualities of my friends more nicely than they do themselves. I have astonished some with the pertinence of my description, and have given them warning of themselves. By having from my infancy been accustomed to contemplate my own life in that of others, I have acquired a complexion studious in that particular. And when I am once intent upon it, I let few things

\* Lucan. lib. iv. ver. 599.  
Antisthenes, lib. vi. § 2.

† Diog. Laert. in the life of An-



about me, whether countenances, humours, or discourses which serve to that purpose, escape me. I study all, both what I am to avoid, and what I am to follow. Also in my friends, I discover their inward inclinations by their productions; not by ranging this infinite variety of so different and detached actions into certain species and chapters, not distinctly distributing my parcels and divisions under known heads and classes.

*Sed neque quàm multæ species, et nomina quæ sint,  
Est numerus \*.*

But not the number of their kind and names,  
They are too many.

The learned speak and deliver their fancies more specifically, and by piece-meal. I, who see no further into things than as custom informs me, generally give mine by way of experiment, without form and method. As in this, I pronounce my opinion by loose and disjointed articles; it is a thing that cannot be spoken at once, and in gross. Relation and conformity are not to be found in such low and common souls as ours. Wisdom is a solid and entire building, of which every piece keeps its place, and carries its mark. *Sola sapientia in se tota conversa est* †. “Wisdom only is wholly turned into itself.” I leave it to artists, (and I know not whether or no they will be able to bring it about in a thing so perplexed, small and casual) to marshal into distinct bodies, this infinite diversity of faces, and to settle and regulate our inconstancy. I not only find it hard to piece our actions to one another, but I likewise find it very hard to design them properly every one by themselves by any principal quality, so ambiguous and capricious they are by the se-

\* Virg. Geor. lib. ii. ver. 103, where he is speaking of the innumerable kinds of grapes.

† Cicero de Fin. lib. iii. cap. 7.



veral lights. What is remarked for rare in Perseus king of Macedon, that his mind fixing it self to no one condition, wandered through all sorts of life, and behaved in a manner so wild and extravagant, that it was neither known by himself, or any other, what kind of man he was \*, seems almost to suit all mankind. And I have seen another of his temper, to whom I think this conclusion might more properly be applied: he kept no medium, but was still running headlong from one extreme to another, upon occasions not to be guessed at; he steered no manner of course without wonderful contrariety; and had no one quality uncompounded: so that the best guess that man can one day make, will be that he affected and studied to make himself known, by being not to be known. A man had need have good ears to hear himself frankly censured. And as there are few that can bear this without being nettled, those who hazard the undertaking it to us, manifest a singular effect of friendship; for it is sincere love indeed, to attempt to hurt and offend us for our own good. I think it rude to censure a man whose ill qualities are more than his good ones. Plato requires three things in him that will examine the soul of another, to wit †, knowledge, good will, and boldness.

I was once asked what I would have thought myself fit for, had any one designed to make use of me in my younger years.

*Dum melior vires sanguis dabat, æmu' a nedum  
Temporibus geminis canebat sparsa senectus ‡.*

Whilst better blood my limbs with vigour fed,  
And ere old age had snow'd upon my head.

\* Tit. Liv. lib. xii. cap. 20.  
titled Gorgias.

† Socrates, in Plato's dialogue in-

‡ Æneid. lib. v. ver. 415.



Montaigne  
would have  
been a fit per-  
son to talk  
freely to his so-  
vereign, to tell  
him truths, and  
to teach him to  
know himself.

For nothing, said I. And I am willing enough to excuse my inability to do any thing, that may enslave myself to another. But I would have told these truths to my sovereign, and have controuled his manners, if he had so pleased; not in gross by scholastic lessons, which I understand not, and from which indeed I see no true reformation spring in those that do; but by observing them gradually, at all opportunities, and simply and naturally judging them by the eye, and distinctly one by one, giving him to understand upon what terms he was in the common opinion, in opposition to his flatterers. There is none of us that would not be worse than kings, if so continually corrupted as they are with that sort of vermin. Could even Alexander, that great king and philosopher, defend himself from them? I would have fidelity, judgment, and freedom enough for that purpose. This would be a nameless office; otherwise it would lose both its grace and effect; and it is a part that is not indifferently fit for all men. For truth itself has not the privilege to be spoken at all times, and in all events; the use of it, noble as it is, has its circumscriptions and limits. It oft falls out, as the world now goes, that a man lets it slip into the ear of a prince, not only to no purpose, but even injuriously and unjustly. No man shall make me believe, that a virtuous remonstrance may not be viciously applied, and that the interest of the substance is not oft to give place to that of the form.

For such a purpose, I would have a man that is content with his own fortune;

*Quod fit, esse velit, nihilque malit \*.*

Who likes that present state of his,  
And would not be but what he is.

\* Mart. Ep. lib. x. epig. 47. ver. 12.



and born to a moderate fortune ; as on the one hand he would not scruple to touch his sovereign's heart to the quick, for fear of losing his preferment, and on the other, by being of a middling quality, he would have more easy communication with all sorts of people : And I would have this office limited to only one man, because to diffuse the privilege of this liberty and privacy to many, would beget an inconvenient irreverence ; and even of that one too, I would above all things require the fidelity of silence.

Who would be the most proper person for the exercise of this office to princes.

A king is not to be believed when he boasts of his constancy in standing the shock of the enemy for his glory, if for his profit and amendment, he cannot bear the freedom of a friend's advice, which can do no more than sting his ear, the remainder of its effect being still in his own power. Now, there is no rank of men whatever who stand in so great need of true and free admonition as they do. They act in a public sphere, and have so many spectators to please, that when men have used to conceal from them whatever would divert them from their own course, they insensibly have found themselves involved in the hatred and detestation of their people, sometimes upon such slight occasions as they might have avoided without any prejudice even to their pleasures had they been advised and set right in time. Their favourites commonly have more regard to themselves, than they have to their sovereigns ; and indeed it stands them upon, as in truth most offices of true friendship when applied to the sovereign, are disagreeable and dangerous in the essay ; so that therein there is need, not only of very great affection and freedom, but of courage too.

How much kings are in want of such a person.

Free advice necessary for kings.



The advantage that may be derived from Montaigne's Essays for the health of the soul, and much more for that of the body.

To conclude, all this medley of things here compiled is nothing but a register of my own experiments in life, which for its internal soundness is exemplary enough to take instruction against the grain; but as to bodily health, no man can furnish out more profitable experience than I, who present it pure, and no way corrupted and changed by art and opinion. Experience is properly upon its own dung-hill in the subject of physic, where reason wholly gives it place. Tiberius \* said, that whoever had lived twenty years, ought to be responsible to himself for all things that were hurtful or wholesome to him, and to know how to order himself without physic. And he might have learnt it of Socrates, who advising his disciple to be solicitous of their health, and to make it their chief study, added, that it was hard if a man of sense, that took care of his exercises and diet, did not better know than any physician, what was good or bad for him. Indeed physic professes is always to have experience for the touch-stone of its operations. And Plato was right when he said, that to be a true physician, he who professed that science should first himself have passed through all the diseases he pretends to cure, and through all the accidents and circumstances whereof he is to judge. It is but reason they should get the pox, if they will know how to cure it: for my part, I would chuse to put myself into such hands; for the others only guide us, like him who paints the sea, rocks, and ports, and draws the model of a ship as he sits safe at his table;

\* I cannot imagine where Montaigne met with that saying of Tiberius, that after the age of 20 years, a man ought to have nothing to do with physical remedies. Suetonius only says, that Tiberius, after he was 30 years of age governed his health after his own fancy, and without the help and advice of physicians. Sueton. in the Life of Tiberius, § 68. And Plutarch tells us in his excellent treatise of the Rules and Precepts for Health, that he remembered to have heard, that Tiberius used to say, that the man who after threescore years of age held his hand out to a physician to feel his pulse, deserved to be laughed at for a fool. Chap. 23. of Amyot's translation.

but



but send him to sea, he knows not what course to steer. They make such a description of our maladies, as a town-crier does of a lost horse, or dog, of such a colour, such a height, such an ear ; but bring the animal to him, and he knows him not for all that. God grant that physic may one day give me some good and visible relief, namely, when I shall cry out in good earnest.

*Tandem efficaci do manus scientiæ \**.

At length I own the power of thy pill,  
And let its operation cure or kill.

The arts that promise to keep our bodies and souls in health, promise a great deal, but there is none that less keep their promise. And in our times, those that make profession of these arts amongst us, manifest the effects of them less than all other men. One may say of them at the most, that they sell medicinal drugs, but that they are physicians a man cannot say. I have lived so long as to be able to give an account of my practice hitherto. And, for whoever has a mind to read it, as his raster, I give him this essay, of which these are some articles, as they occur to my memory. I have no custom that has not varied according to accidents ; but I record those to which I have been most used, and that hitherto have had the greatest possession of me.

My form of life is the same in sickness as in health ; the same bed, the same hours, the same meats and the same liquors serve me ; I add nothing to them but greater or less moderation, according to my strength and appetite. My health consists in maintaining my wonted state without disturbance. I see that sickness deprives me of it on one hand, and if I will be ruled by the physicians, they will rob me of it on the other hand ; so that both by fortune and by art I am put out

Montaigne's  
course of life,  
the same in sick-  
ness as in health.

† Hor. epode 17. ver. 1.



of my road. I believe nothing more certainly than this, that I cannot be hurt by the use of things to which I have been so long accustomed. It is custom that gives the form to a man's life, as it best pleases her, who in that is all in all : it is the beverage of Circe that varies our nature how it pleases. How many nations, and but a little way from us, think our fear of the sun's exhalations in a very clear day, that so manifestly hurt us, ridiculous, and our very watermen and peasants laugh at it. You make a German sick if you lay him upon a mattrafs, as you do an Italian if you put him on a feather-bed ; and a Frenchman without curtains and a fire. A Spanish stomach cannot hold out to eat as we can, nor ours to drink like the Swiss. A German made me very merry at Augsbourg in finding fault with our hearths by the same arguments which we commonly make use of in decrying their stoves : for, to say the truth, that smothered heat, and the scent too of that matter with which they are heated again and again, offend most people who are not used to them, but not me ; yet as to the rest, this heat being equal, constant, and universal, without flame, without smoke, and without the wind that comes down our chimnies, they may in other respects endure comparison with ours. Why do we not imitate the Roman architecture ? For, they say, that anciently fires were not made in their houses, but on the outside, and at the bottom of them, from whence the heat was conveyed to the whole fabric by pipes contrived in the wall, which were drawn twining about the rooms that were to be warmed : which I have seen plainly described somewhere in Seneca. This German gentleman hearing me commend the conveniencies and beauties of his city, which truly deserves it, began to pity me that I was to go away. And the first inconvenience he alledged to me was, the dizziness which the chimneys elsewhere brought upon me. He had heard some one make this complaint, and fixed it upon us, he being by custom deprived of the means of perceiving it in his house. All heat that comes from  
fire



fire makes me weak and dull, and yet Evenus said, that fire was the best condiment of life. I rather chuse any other way of making myself warm. We are afraid to drink our wines when towards the bottom of the vessel; in Portugal those fumes are reputed delicate, and is the beverage of princes. In  
Palled wine in esteem in Portugal.  
fine, every nation has several customs and usances, that are not only unknown, but savage and miraculous to some others. What should we do with those people who admit of no testimonies, if not printed, who believe not men if not in a book, nor truth, if not of competent age? We dignify our fopperies when we commit them to the press. It is of a great deal more weight to him you speak of, to say, "I have seen such a thing," than if you only say, "I have heard such a thing." But I, who no more disbelieve a man's mouth than his pen, and who know that men write as indiscreetly as they speak, and that esteem this age as much as one that is past, do as soon quote a friend of my acquaintance as Aulus Gellius or Macrobius, and what I have seen, as what they have writ. And, as it is held of virtue, that it is not greater for having continued longer, so do I hold of truth, that for being older it is not wiser. I often say, that is mere folly that makes us run after strange and and scholastic examples? Their fertility is the same now that it was in the time of Homer and Plato. But it is not that we derive more honour from the quotation than from the truth of the discourse? As if it were to borrow our proof from the shops of Vascosan or of Plantin, than of what is to be seen in our own village: or else indeed, that we have not the wit to cull out and make useful what we see before us, and judge of it lively enough to draw it into example. For if we say that we want authority to procure faith to our testimony, we speak from the purpose, forasmuch as, in my opinion, of the most ordinary, common, and known things, could we but find out their light, the greatest miracles  
of



of nature might be formed, and the most wonderful examples, especially upon the subject of human actions. Now upon the subject I am speaking of, setting aside the examples I have gathered from books, and what Aristotle says of Andron the Argian, that he travelled over the arid sands of Libya without drinking; a gentleman who has very well behaved himself in several employments, said, in a place where I was, that he had rid from Madrid to Lisbon in the heat of summer, without any drink at all; he is very healthful, and vigorous for his age, and hath nothing extraordinary in the use of his life, but this, to live sometimes two or three months, nay, a whole year, without drinking. He is sometimes athirst, but he lets it pass over, and holds, it is an appetite which easily goes off of itself, and drinks more out of humour than either for need or pleasure. Here is another example: it is not long ago that I found one of the most learned men in France, among those of the greatest fortunes studying in a corner of a hall that they had separated for him with tapestry, and about him a rabble of his servants, that you may be sure were rude and loud enough. He told me, and Seneca says almost the same of himself, he made an advantage of this noise; as if beaten with this rattle, he so much the better recollected and retired himself into himself for contemplation, and that this tempest of voices repercussed his thoughts within himself. Being at Padua, he had his study so long situated in the rattle of coaches, and the tumult of the public place, that he not only formed himself to the contempt, but even to the use of noise, for the service of his studies. Socrates answered Alcibiades, who being astonished at his patience, asked him how he could endure the perpetual scolding of his wife, "Why," said he, "as those do who are accustomed to the ordinary noise of wheels to draw water." I am quite otherwise; I have a tender head, a brain very volatile; and when it  
is



is bent upon any one thing, the least buzzing of a fly tears it into pieces. Seneca \*, in his youth, having, by the example of Sextius, formed a positive resolution of eating nothing that had life, passed over a whole year without it, as he said, with pleasure, and only returned to animal food, that he might not be suspected of taking up this rule from some new religion by which it was prescribed. But he took up, however, from the precepts of Attalus, a custom, not to lie any more upon soft bedding, but even to his old age made use of such as would not yield to any pressure. What the custom of his time denominated roughness, ours treats as effeminacy. Do but observe the difference betwixt the way of living of my labourers, and that of mine; the Scythians and the Indians have nothing more remote both from my force and method. I know very well, that I have picked up beggar-boys to serve me, who soon after have quitted both my kitchen and livery, only that they might return to their former course of life: and I found one afterwards gathering muscles out of the sink for his dinner, whom I could neither by intreaties nor threats, reclaim from the sweetness and relish he found in indigence. Beggars have their grandeur and delights, as well as the rich; and it is said, their particular dignities and politics. These are the effects of custom, which can mould us not only into what form she pleases, (and yet the sages say, we ought to apply ourselves to the best, which she would soon make easy to us) but also to change and variation, which is the most noble and most useful of her documents. The best of my bodily perfections is, that I am flexible and not very obstinate. I have some inclinations more proper and ordinary, and more agreeable than others; but I deviate from them with very little trouble, and easily slip into a contrary course. A young man ought to cross his own rules to awake his vigour, and to keep it from growing mouldy and rusty. There is no course of life so

\* Seneca, epist. 108.



weak and fottish, as that which is carried on by rule and discipline.

*Ad primum lapidem vectari cum placet, hora  
Sumitur ex libro; si prurit frictus ocelli  
Angulus, inspectâ genesi collyria querit\*.*

If but a mile he travel out of town  
The planetary hour must first be known;  
If he but rub the corner of his eye,  
He chuses salve by his nativity.

He will often relapse into excesses, if he will take my word for it; otherwise the least debauch ruins him. He renders himself uneasy, and disagreeable in conversation. The worst quality in a well-bred man is delicacy, and being attached to a certain particular form; and it is particular, if not pliable and supple. It is a kind of reproach, not to be able, or not to dare to do what he sees others do. Let such as those sit at home. It is in every man indecent, but in a soldier vicious and intolerable; who, as Philopœmen said, ought to accustom himself to all variety, and inequality of life.

The customs to which Montaigne was a slave in his old age.

Though I have been brought up as much as was possible to liberty and indifference, yet so it is, that through this indifference, by growing old, and having more settled upon certain forms (my age is now past instruction, and I have henceforward nothing to do but to take care of it as well as I can) custom has already, ere I was aware, so imprinted its character in me, in certain things, that I look upon it as a kind of excess to depart from them. And, without a force upon myself, I cannot sleep in the day-time, or eat between meals, nor breakfast, nor go to bed, without a great interval, as of three hours after supper; nor get children till I have slept, and never standing upon my feet, nor endure to put myself in a sweat, nor

\* Juven. sat. 6. ver. 576.



Quench my thirst either with pure water or wine, nor keep my head long bare, nor have it shaved after dinner; and I would be as uneasy without my gloves, as without my shirt, or without washing when I rise from table, or out of my bed; and could not lie without a canopy and curtains, as necessary things: I could dine without a table-cloth, but not without a clean napkin, after the German fashion. I foul them more than they, or the Italians do, and make but little use either of spoon or fork. I am sorry that the same is not in use amongst us, that I see at the tables of kings; which is, to change our napkins at every service, as they do our plates. We are told of that laborious soldier Marius, that growing old, he became nice in his drinking, and never drank but out of a peculiar cup of his own. I, in like manner, fancy glasses of a certain form, and do not willingly drink in a common glass with others: all metal offends me compared with matter clear and transparent: let my eyes taste too, as far as they can. I owe several such delicacies to custom. Nature has also on the other hand, helped me to some of hers, as no longer to be able to endure two full meals in one day, without overcharging my stomach, nor a total abstinence from one of those meals, without filling myself with wind, furring my mouth, and blunting my appetite. I also dislike the evening air. For of late years, in marches, which often happen to be all night long, after five or six hours, my stomach begins to be queasy, with a violent pain in my head, so that I always vomit before day-break. When others go to breakfast I go to sleep, and when I rise am as brisk as before. I had always been told, that the dews never fell but in the beginning of the night; but for certain years past, after long and familiar acquaintance with a lord possessed with the opinion, that the air is more sharp and dangerous about the declining of the sun, an hour or two before it sets, which he carefully avoids, and despises that of the night; he had almost brought me into his opinion. What, shall the very doubt and enquiry strike our imagination so far as to alter us? Such as on a sudden  
give



give way to their propensities, bring entire ruin upon themselves. And I am sorry for several gentlemen, who, through the folly of their physicians, have in their youth and strength brought themselves into consumptions. It were even yet better to endure a cough, than by disuse for ever to lose the commerce of common life in an action of so great utility. Ill-natured science, to put us out of conceit with the most pleasant hours of the day : let us keep possession of it to the last. For the most part a man hardens himself by being obstinate, and corrects his constitution ; as Cæsar did the falling-sickness, by dint of contempt. A man should addict himself to the best rules, but not inflave himself to them ; yet there is one to which a slavish attachment is useful.

The care that  
Montaigne took  
to keep his body  
open.

Both kings and philosophers go to stool, and ladies too ; public lives are bound to ceremony ; mine that is obscure and private, enjoys all natural dispensation. Soldier and Gascon are also characters a little subject to indiscretion in this point ; wherefore I shall say of this action, that it is necessary to refer it to certain prescribed and nocturnal hours, and to force a man's self to it by custom, as I have done ; but not to subject himself, as I have done in my declining years, to look out for a particular convenience of place and seat for that purpose, and making it troublesome by long sitting : yet in the foulest offices, is it not in some measure excusable to require more care and cleanliness ? *Natura homo mundum, et elegans animal est* ; “ man is by nature a clean and elegant creature \*.” Of all the actions of nature, I hate most the being interrupted in that. I have seen many soldiers troubled with an irregular call, whilst I and my belly never fail of our punctual assignation, which is at leaping out of bed, if some violent business, or sickness do not molest us.

The surest  
course to be  
taken by valetudinarians.

I do not think therefore, as I said before, that valetudinarians can be safer than by keeping close to that course of life wherein they had been bred and

\* Seneca, epist. 92.



trained up. Alteration, be it what it will, proves hurtful. Can you believe that chestnuts can hurt a Perigourdin, or one of Lucca; or milk and cheese the mountaineers? Men enjoin them not only a new, but a contrary method of life, a change which a man in health could not endure. To prescribe water to a native of Bretagne of threescore and ten; to shut a seaman up in a stove, and to forbid a footman to walk, is to deprive them of motion, and at last of air and light.

— *an vivere tanti est?*

*Cogimur a suetis animum suspendere rebus,*

*Atque ut vivamus vivere definimus.*

*Hoc superesse reor quibus et spirabilis aer*

*Et lux qua regimur, redditur ipsa gravis \*.*

To human life a gift of so much price  
When our old habits we must sacrifice,  
And live no longer, — to live otherwise?  
I can't imagine that they longer live,  
To whom nor light, nor air does comfort give.

}

If they do no other good, they do this at least, that they prepare patients betimes for death, by little and little undermining and curtailing the usage of life.

Both well and sick, I have ever willingly gratified the appetites that press upon me. I give great authority to my propensities and desires. I do not love to cure one disease by another. I hate remedies that are more troublesome than the disease. To be subject to the stone, and subject to abstain from the pleasure of eating oysters, are two evils instead of one. The disease torments us on the one hand, and the prescription on the other. Since we are ever in danger of mistaking, let us rather run a hazard by the continuance of pleasure. The world proceeds quite contrary, and

Montaigne  
whether well  
or sick indulged  
his natural ap-  
petites.

\* Gallus, eleg. i. ver. 55—255.

thinks



thinks nothing profitable that is not painful ; ease stands suspected by it. My appetite is in several things of itself happily enough accommodated to the health of my stomach. Acrimony and quickness in sauces were pleasant to me when young, but my stomach disliking them, my taste for them soon went off. Wine is hurtful to sick people ; and it is the first thing that my mouth disrelishes when I am sick, and with an invincible disgust. Whatever I take against my liking does me harm ; but nothing hurts me that I eat with appetite and delight ; I never received harm by any action that was very pleasant to me ; and accordingly have made all medicinal conclusions give entire precedence to my pleasure. And, when I was young,

*Quem circumcursans huc, atque huc sæpe Cupido  
Fulgebat crocinâ splendidus in tunica \*.*

Whilst Cupid round me fluttering did fly,  
In his gay mantle of the Tyrian dye.

I gave myself the reins as licentious and rashly as any body else to my then governing passion.

*Et militavi non sine gloria †.*

And in the service of beauty I gallantly fought.

yet more in continuance and holding out, than in a fally.

*Sex me vix memini sustinuisse vices ‡.*

\* Catullus, carm. 56. ver. 133.

† Hor. lib. iii. ode 26. ver. 2.

‡ Ovid. Amor. lib. iii. eleg. 7. ver. 26. Some very curious enquirers will blame me for not having explained this little verse ; and there are others whom I rather chose to keep fair with, would give me a rap on the knuckles if I had. All I can do to oblige the first, is to refer them to Fontaine's Tale de Berceau, ver. 246.



It is certainly a misfortune, and a miracle at once, to confess at what a tender age I was first subjected to love: it was indeed by chance; for it was long before the years of choice or discretion: I do not remember myself so long ago. My fortune may very well be compared to that of Quartilla \*, who could not remember when she lost her virginity.

*Inde tragus celeresque pili, mirandaque matri  
Barba mea †.*

Therefore my beard budded early to my mother's admiration.

Physicians commonly submit their rules to the violent longings that happen to sick persons, with very good success. This great desire, strange and vicious as it is, it cannot be imagined, but that nature must have a hand in it. And then how easy a thing is it to satisfy the fancy? In my opinion, this part wholly carries it, at least, above all the rest. The most grievous and common evils are those that fancy loads us with. This Spanish saying pleases me in several senses; *Defienda me dios de my*; "God defend me from myself." I am sorry when I am sick, that I have not some longing that might give me the contentment of satisfying it; physic would hardly be able to divert me from it. I do the same when I am well. I can think of very little more than to hope or wish. It is pity a man should be so weak and languishing, as to have nothing left him but wishing.

The art of physic is not so solidly established as to leave us without authority for whatever we do; according to Fernelius and Scala it changes according to the climates and moons. If your physician does not think it good for you to

The uncertainty of physic gives a sanction to most of our longings.

\* Petronius, p. 17. the Paris edit. an. 1587. ep. 23. ver. 7. and 8.

† Martial, lib. xi.



sleep, to drink wine, or to eat such and such meats, never trouble yourself, I will find you another that shall not be of his opinion; the diversity of physical arguments and opinions includes all sorts of methods. I saw a miserable sick person panting and burning with thirst, in order that he might be cured; who was afterwards laughed at by another physician, who condemned that advice as hurtful to him: did he not torment himself to good purpose? A man of that profession is lately dead of the stone, who had made trial of extreme abstinence to contend with his disease. His fellow physicians said, that on the contrary, this abstinence had dried his body up, and baked the gravel in his kidneys.

Why talking  
was hurtful to  
Montaigne  
in his sickness.

I have observed, that both in wounds and sicknesses, speaking discomposes and hurts me as much as any irregularity I can commit. My voice spends and tires me, for it is loud and strained; so what when I have gone to whisper some great persons about affairs of consequence, they have oft desired me to moderate my voice.

A short digression on the manner of regulating the voice in conversation.

This story justifies a digression here. A person in a certain Greek school\*, speaking loud as I do, the master of the ceremonies sent to him to speak softly, "tell him then he must send me," replied the other, "the tone he would have me speak in." To which the other replied, "that he should take the tone from the ear of him to whom he spake." This was well said, if he meant, "speak according to the affair you are speaking about to your auditor:" for if it mean, "it is sufficient that he hears you; or govern yourself by him;" I do not think it to be reason. The tone and motion of the voice carries with it a great deal of the expression and signification of my meaning, and it is I who am to govern it, to make myself understood. There is a voice to instruct, a voice to flatter, and a voice to reprehend. I will not only that my voice reach him, but perhaps that it strike and pierce him. When I rattle my

\* This was Carneades the Academic philosopher, see *Diog. Laert. lib. iv. sect. 63.*



footman with a sharp and bitter tone, it would be very pretty for him to say, “pray master, speak lower, I hear you very well.” *Est quædam vox ad auditum accommodata, non magnitudine, sed proprietate*; “there is a certain voice accommodated to the hearing, not by the loudness, but propriety\*.” Speech is half his that speaks, and half his that hears; the last of which ought to prepare himself to receive it, according to the bias it takes. Like tennis players, he that receives the ball, shifts and prepares, according as he sees him move who strikes the ball, and according to the stroke itself.

Experience has moreover taught me this, that we ruin ourselves with impatience. Evils have their life and limits, their diseases, and their recovery; the constitution of maladies is formed by the pattern of the constitution of animals; they have their fortunes and days limited from their birth. Whoever attempts imperiously to cut them short by force in the middle of their course, does lengthen and multiply them, and incenses instead of appeasing them. I am of Crantor’s opinion that we are neither obstinately and wilfully to oppose evils, nor truckle under them for want of courage, but that we are naturally to give way to them, according to their condition and our own; we ought to let diseases take their course: and I find they stay less with me, who let them alone. I have lost those which are reputed the most tenacious and obstinate, without any help or art, and contrary to the physician’s rules. Let us a little permit nature to operate; she understands her own affairs better than we. But such a one died, and so shall you, if not of that disease, of another. And how many have nevertheless died, who have had three physicians to attend them? Example is a mirror, vague and universal, and in all senses. If it be a pleasant medicine, take it, it is always so much present good. I will never stick at the name nor the colour, if it be grateful to the palate: pleasure is one of the chief kinds of profit. I have suffered

Distempers have their periods, which we must wait for with patience.

\* Quintilian Institut. Orat. lib. xi. cap. 3.



rheums, gouty defluxions, diarrheas, palpitations of the heart, megrims, and other accidents, to grow old, and die away in me, which I have been rid of when I was half fit to nourish them. They are sooner wrought upon by courtesy than bravado; we must patiently suffer the laws of our condition, we are born to grow old, to grow weak, and to be sick in despite of all medicine. It is the first lesson the Mexicans teach their children; so soon as ever they come out of their mother's wombs, they thus salute them, "thou art come into the world, child, to endure; endure therefore, suffer, and be silent." It is injustice to lament that that is fallen out to any one, which may befall every one. *Indignare si quid in te inique, propriè constitutum est* \*; "then be angry, when there is any thing unjustly decreed against thee alone."

What cannot be avoided must be endured with patience.

See an old man who begs of God that he will maintain his health vigorous and entire, that is to say, that he will restore him to youth:

*Stulte, quid hæc frustra votis puerilibus optas †?*

In vain thou fool are all thy childish pray'rs.

Is it not folly? his condition is not capable of it. The gout, the stone, and indigestion, are symptoms of long years, as heat, rains and winds, are of long voyages. Plato ‡ does not believe that Æsculapius troubled himself to provide by a regimen for prolonging life in a weak and wasted body, useless to his country, and to his profession, and to beget healthful and robust children; and he does not think this solicitude suitable to the divine justice and prudence, which is to direct all things to utility. My good friend, your business is done, no-body

\* Seneca, epist. 91.

‡ De Republica, lib. iii. p. 623.

† Ovid. Trist. lib. iii. eleg. 8. ver. 21.



can restore you, they can at the most but patch you up,  
and prop you a little, and prolong your misery an hour  
or two.

*Non secus instantem cupiens fulcire ruinam,  
Diversis contra nititur obicibus,  
Donec certa dies, omni compage soluta,  
Ipsum cum rebus subruat auxilium \*.*

Like one, who willing to defer a while  
A sudden ruin, props the tott'ring pile,  
Till in short space the house, the props and all  
Together with a dreadful ruin fall.

We must learn to suffer what we cannot avoid. Our life, like the harmony of the world, is composed of contrary things, also of several notes, sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, spritely and solemn; and the musician who would only affect one of these, what would he be able to say? He must know how to make use of them all, and to mix them; and we likewise the goods and evils which are congenial with our life: our being cannot subsist without this mixture, and the one tribe is no less necessary to it than the other. To attempt to kick against natural necessity, is to represent the folly of Ctesiphon, who undertook to kick with his mule.

I consult little about the alterations I feel; for those people take advantage when they have you at their mercy. They cudgel your ears with their prognostics; and having formerly surprised me, weakened with sickness, injuriously handled me with their doctrines and magisterial taunts; one while menacing me with great pains, and another with approaching death; by which threats I was indeed moved and shaken, but not dejected, nor jostled from my place; and though my judgment was

Why Montaigne avoided to consult physicians.

\* Gallus, eleg. 1. ver. 173, &c.



neither altered nor distracted, yet it was at least embarrassed by it. It is always agitation and struggle.

He loved to  
flatter his ima-  
gination in his  
illness.

Now I use my imagination as gently as  
I can, and would discharge it of all trou-  
ble and contest, if I could. A man must  
assist, flatter, and deceive it, if he can.

My mind is fit for that office. It wants no appearances throughout. And could it persuade, as it preaches, it would successfully relieve me. Will you have an example? It tells me that it is for my good to have the stone; that structures of my age are naturally to suffer some ruin; that it is now time they should begin to disjoint, and to confess a decay; it is a common necessity, and there was no new miracle to be wrought for me: I thereby pay what is due to old age, and I cannot expect a better account of it: that society ought to comfort me being fallen into

The stone ordi-  
nary in old  
men especially  
men of quality.

the most common infirmity of men of my  
age\*. I see every-where men tormented  
with the same disease: and am honoured  
by their fellowship, as men of the best  
quality are most frequently afflicted with it; it is a no-  
ble and dignified disease. That of such as are afflicted  
with it, few have it to a less degree of pain, and yet they  
are put to the trouble of a wretched regimen, and the  
daily taking of nauseous drugs; whereas I owe my bet-  
ter state purely to my good fortune. For some ordi-  
nary broths of eringos, and burst-wort, that I have  
twice or thrice taken to oblige the ladies, who, with  
greater kindness than my pain, would needs present me  
half of theirs, seemed to me equally easy to take, and  
fruitless in operation. They have a thousand vows to make  
to Æsculapius, and as many crowns to pay to their  
physician, for the voiding gravel easily and plentifully,  
which I often do by the benefit of nature. Even the  
decency of my countenance is not disturbed by it in  
company; and I can hold my water ten hours, and as  
long as any man that is in perfect health. The fear



of this disease says one, did formerly affright thee, when it was unknown to thee; the crying and roaring of those that make it worse by their impatience, begot a horror in thee: it is an infirmity that punishes the members by which thou hast most offended: thou art a conscientious fellow;

*Quæ venit indignè pœna, dolenda venit \*.*

To guiltless sufferers our regret is due.

Consider this chastisement, it is very easy in comparison of that of others, and inflicted with a paternal tenderness: do but observe how late it comes; it only seizes and incommodes that stage of thy life, which is upon the matter steril, and lost; having, as it were by composition, given way to the licentiousness and pleasures of thy youth. The fear and the compassion that people have of this disease, serves thee for matter of pride. A quality whereof, if thou hast thy judgment purified, and thy reason be right and sound, thy friends will yet notwithstanding, discover some tincture in thy complexion. It is pleasure to hear it said of a man's self, "here is a great fortitude, here is great patience!" Thou art seen to sweat with the excessive pain, to look pale and red, to tremble, to vomit blood, to suffer strange contractions and convulsions, by starts to let tears drop from thine eyes, to make thick, black, and dreadful urine, or to have it suppressed by some sharp and jagged stone, that cruelly pricks and tears the neck of the bladder, whilst thou entertainest the company with thy usual countenance, drolling by fits with thy servants, making one in a continued discourse, now and then excusing thy pain, and making thy sufferance less than it is. Does it put thee in mind of the men of past times, who so greedily sought diseases to keep their virtue in breath and exercise? Put the case that nature inclines and

\* Ovid. epist. 5. ver. 8.



forces thee to that glorious school, into which thou wouldst never have entered, of thy own free will. If thou tellst me, that it is a dangerous and mortal disease; what diseases are not? For it is a physical cheat to except any, and to say, that they do not tend directly to death: what matter is it, if they steer that way by accident, and if they slide and wheel gently into the path that leads to it? But thou dost not die because thou art sick, thou diest because thou art living. Death actually kills thee without the help of sickness: and to some, sickness has deferred death, who have lived the longer by reason that they thought themselves always dying. To which may be added, that as of wounds, so of diseases, some are medicinal and wholesome. The cholic is oft no less long-lived than you. We know men with whom it has continued from their infancy, even to extreme old age, and if they had not parted company, it would have attended them longer still; you oftner kill it than it kills you: and though it present you the image of approaching death, were it not a good office to a man of such an age, to put him in mind of his latter end? What is worse, thou hast no longer any thing that should make thee desire to be cured. Common necessity will however presently call thee away. Do but consider how artfully and gently she puts thee out of conceit with life, and weans thee from the world; not compelling thee with a tyrannical subjection, as by many other infirmities which you see old men afflicted with, that hold them in continual torment, and keep them in perpetual and incessant pains and infirmities; but by warnings and instructions at several intervals, intermixing long pauses of repose, as it were to give thee scope to meditate and ruminate upon thy lesson at thy leisure; in order to enable thee to judge aright, and to assume the resolution of a man of courage, she presents to thee the entire state of thy condition, both in good and evil, and with a very chearful, and an insupportable life, alternately in one and the same day. If thou embracest not death, at least thou shakest hands



hands with it once a month; by which thou hast more cause to hope that it will one day surprise thee without warning; and that being so oft conducted to the water-side, and thinking thyself to be still upon the accustomed terms, thou and thy confidence will at one time or another be unexpectedly waisted over\*. A man has no reason to complain of diseases that fairly divide the time with health. I am obliged to fortune for having so often assaulted me with the same sort of weapons; she forms and fashions me by usage, and hardens and habituates me so to her attacks that I can know within a little, for how much I shall be quit. For want of natural memory, I make one of paper; and as any new symptom happens in my disease, I write it down; from whence it falls out, that being now almost past through all sorts of examples, if any astonishment threaten me, tumbling over these little loose notes, like the Sibyls leaves, I never fail of finding matter of consolation from some favourable prognostic in my past experience. Custom also makes me hope better for the time to come. For the conduct of this evacuation having so long continued, it is to be believed that nature will not alter her course, and that no other worse accident will happen than what I already feel. Besides, the condition of this disease is not unsuitable to my forward and hasty complexion. When it assaults me gently, I am afraid, for it is then for a great while; but it has naturally brisk and vigorous excesses. It claws me to purpose for a day or two. My reins held out an age without alteration, and I have almost now lived another since they changed their state. Evils have their periods as well as benefit, perhaps this infirmity draws towards an end. Age weakens the heat of my stomach, the digestion of which being less perfect, it sends this crude matter to my reins; and why at a certain revolution may not the

\* This seems to be an allusion to what was fabled by the ancient Greeks and Romans, that the dead were transported over the river Styx in Charon's ferry-boat; a fancy with which we still adorn our poetry, and sometimes adopt in prose too in our familiar conversation.



heat of my reins be also abated, so that they can no longer petrify my phlegm, and nature pave the way for some other manner of purgation. Years have evidently helped me to drain certain rheums; and why not those excrements which furnish matter for gravel? but is there any thing sweet in comparison of this sudden change, when from an excessive pain, I come, by the voiding of a stone, to recover, as from a flash of lightning, the beautiful light of health, so free and full as it happens in our sudden and the sharpest fits of the

Health more  
pleasant after  
sickness.

cholic: is there any thing in the pain suffered, that can compare to the pleasure of so sudden an amendment? Oh! how

much more pleasant does health seem to me after sickness so near and contiguous to each other, as that I can distinguish them in the presence of one another in their best state, when they vie with one another, as it were, which shall have the mastery! What the Stoics say, that vices are profitably introduced, to give value and support to virtue; we can with better reason, and less hazard of censure, say of nature, that she has given us pain for the honour and service of pleasure and indolence. When Socrates, after his fetters were knocked off, felt the pleasure of that itching which the weight of them had caused in his legs, he rejoiced to consider the strict alliance betwixt pain and pleasure, how they are linked together by a necessary connexion, so that by turns they follow and mutually beget one another; and cried out to Æsop, that he ought from this consideration, to have taken a subject proper for a fine fable.

The advantage  
of the stone  
above all other  
distempers.

The worst that I see in other diseases is, that they are not so grievous in their operation, as they are in their issue. A man is a whole year in recovering, and all the while full of weakness and fear. So dangerous and gradual is the recovery of health, that there is no end of it. Before you are allowed to throw off a handkerchief, and then a cap, before they allow you to take the air, to drink wine, lie with your wife, and eat melons, it is odd if you relapse not into some new distemper.



temper. The stone has this privilege, that it carries itself clean off, whereas others always leave behind them some impression and alteration, which renders the body subject to some new disease, and lend a hand to one another.

Those are excusable, that content themselves with possession of us, without extending it farther, and introducing their consequences: but courteous and kind are such whose departure brings us any profitable issue. Since I have been troubled with the stone, I find myself freed from all other accidents, much more methinks than I was before, and have never had any fever since. I argue, that the extreme and frequent vomitings that I am subject to, purge me: and on the other side, my loathings, and the strange fasts I am forced to keep, digest my present humours; and nature in those stones, voids whatever there is in me that is superfluous and hurtful. Let it never be said that this is a medicine too dear bought. For to what purpose are so many stinking apozemes, caustics, incisions, sweats, setons, diets, and so many other methods of cure, which oft, by reason we are not able to undergo their violence and importunity, bring us to our graves? So that when I am seized with the stone, I look upon it as physic; when freed from it, I think it an entire deliverance.

It produces some consequences that are of service.

There is likewise another particular benefit of my disease; which is, that it most plays its game by itself, and lets me play mine, or else I only want courage to do it; for in its greatest fury, I have endured it ten hours together on horseback; do but have patience, you need no other regimen; play, dine, run, do this and the other thing too if you can; your debauch will do you more good than harm. Say as much to one that has the pox, the gout, or a rupture: the other diseases have more universal obligations, rack our actions after another manner, disturb our whole system, and to their consideration engage the whole state of life. This only pinches the skin, it leaves the understanding and will wholly at your disposal, as also the tongue, hands, and



and feet. It rather awakes than stupifies you. The mind is struck with the burning heat of a fever, overwhelmed with an epilepsy, distracted by a sharp megrim, and finally astonished by all diseases that hurt the whole mass, and the most noble parts : this never attacks the soul. If any thing goes amiss with her, it is her own fault, she betrays, dismounts, and abandons herself. There are none but fools who suffer themselves to be persuaded, that this hard and massy body, which is baked in our kidneys, is to be dissolved by draughts : wherefore, when it is once stirred, there is nothing to be done but to give it passage, and indeed it will force it of itself.

I likewise observe this particular convenience in it, that it is a disease wherein we have little to guess at. We are free from the trouble into which other diseases throw us, by the uncertainty of their causes, conditions, and progress. A trouble that is infinitely painful. We have no need of consultation and doctoral interpretations, the senses well enough inform us what it is, and where it is. By such-like arguments, both weak and strong, as Cicero did the disease of his old age, I try to lull, and amuse my imagination, and to soothe its wounds. If I find them worse to-morrow, I will provide new stratagems. True it is, I am come to that pass of late, that the least motion forces pure blood out of my kidneys : and what of that ? I stir nevertheless as before, ride after my hounds with a juvenile ardour, and find that I have very good satisfaction for an accident of that importance, when it costs me no more but a stupor and alteration in that part. It is some great stone that wastes and consumes the substance of my kidneys, and of my life, which by little and little evaporates, not without some natural pleasure, as an excrement henceforward superfluous and troublesome. Now, if I feel any thing to roll, do not expect that I should trouble myself to consult my pulse or my urine, thereby to put myself upon some uneasy forethought ; I shall soon enough feel the pain, without making it longer by the disease of fear. He who fears to suffer, already suffers what he fears. To which may  
be



be added, that the doubts and ignorance of those who take upon them to explain the springs of nature, with her internal progressions, and the many false prognostics of their art, ought to give us to understand, that her ways are utterly unknown.

There is great uncertainty, variety, and obscurity, in what she either promises or threatens; old age excepted, which is an undoubted sign of the approach of death. In all other accidents I see few signs of the futurity, whereon we may ground our divination. I only judge myself by my real sensation, and not by discourse: to what end? since I am resolved to bring nothing to it but expectation and patience. Will you know how much I get by this? Observe those that do otherwise, and who rely upon so many different persuasions and counsels, how oft, and how much they labour under imagination, exclusive of any bodily pain. I have many times pleased myself, being well when I have been safe, and delivered from these dangerous accidents, to communicate them to the physicians, as if they were then beginning to discover themselves in me; where I underwent the terrible sentences of their dreadful conclusions, being very well at ease; and I was the more obliged to the favour of God, and better satisfied of the vanity of this art.

The guessing at diseases by urine very uncertain.

There is nothing that ought so much to be recommended to youth as activity and vigilance. Our life is nothing but motion: I bestir myself with great difficulty, and am slow in every thing, whether in rising, going to bed, or eating. Seven of the clock in the morning is early for me; and where I govern, I never dine before eleven, nor sup till after six. I have formerly attributed the cause of the fevers, and other diseases I have fallen into, to the heaviness and dullness that long sleeping had brought upon me, and have ever repented my sleeping again in the morning. Plato is more angry at the excess of sleeping than that of drinking: I love to lie hard, and alone, even without my wife, as kings and princes do, but pretty well covered with cloaths. They never warm my bed, but since my being grown old, they give me for need warm cloths to

Montaigne a great sleeper.



lay to my feet and stomach. The great Scipio, was branded for a great sleeper; though in my opinion, for no other reason, but that men were displeased, that he was the only man in whom no other fault was to be found. If I have any thing delicate in my way of living, it is rather in my lying, than any thing else; but generally, I give way, and accommodate myself as much as any to necessity. Sleeping has taken up a great part of my life, and I yet continue at the age I now am, to sleep eight or nine hours at a stretch.

He corrects that habit in his latter days, and finds the benefit of it.

I wean myself to my advantage, from this propensity to sloth, and am evidently better for so doing. I find the change a little hard indeed, but in three days it is over, and see but few that live with less sleep, when need requires; and that more constantly exercise themselves, nor to whom journies are less troublesome. My body is capable of long continued, but not of a violent or sudden agitation. I avoid of late all violent exercises, and such as incline me to sweat, my limbs being weary before they are hot. I am used to be upon my legs a whole day together, and am never weary of walking: but from my youth, I never loved to ride upon pavement. On foot I go up to the breech in dirt, and indeed little fellows as I am, are subject in the streets to be elbowed and jostled, for want of presence and stature, and I have ever loved to rest myself, whether sitting or lying, with my heels as high, or higher than my seat.

The military profession very pleasant and honourable.

There is no profession so pleasant as the military, a profession both noble in its execution, (for valour is the strongest, most superb, and most generous of all virtues) and noble in its cause. There is no utility either more extensive, or more just, than the protection of the peace and grandeur of a man's country. The company of so many noble, young, and active men delights you; as does the ordinary sight of so many tragic spectacles; and the freedom of their conversation without art, with a masculine and unceremonious way of living.



living. The variety of a thousand different actions; the encouraging harmony of martial music, that ravishes your ears and warms your souls; the honour of this exercise, may even its severity and hardships, which Plato so little accounts, that in his Republic he makes women and children share in them, are delightful to you. You put yourselves voluntarily upon particular exploits and hazards, according as you judge of their lustre and importance, and see, when even life itself is therein excusably employed,

*Pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis* \*.

How beautiful it is to die in arms.

To fear the common dangers that concern so great a multitude of men; not to dare to do what so many forts of souls, and a whole people dare to do, is for a heart that is effeminate, and mean beyond all measure. Company encourages even children, If others excel you in knowledge, in gracefulness, in strength, or fortune, you have natural causes to blame for that, but to give place to them in fortitude of mind, you can blame none but yourself. Death is more abject, more languishing and painful in bed than in battle; and fevers and catarrhs, are as painful and mortal as a musquet-shot: whoever is formed valiantly to bear the accidents of common life, would need no more courage to be a soldier. *Vivere, mi Lucili, militare est* †; “life, my Lucilius, is a warfare.”

I do not remember that I ever had the itch, yet scratching is one of nature's sweetest gratifications, and nearest at hand, but the smart follows too close. I use it most in my ears, which are often apt to itch.

I came into the world with all my senses entire, even to perfection. My stomach is pretty good, as also is my

Montaigne's  
 hale Constitu-  
 tion.

\* Æneid. lib. ii. ver. 317.

† Senec. ep. 96.



head my breath ; and for the most part, they have continued themselves so in spite of my fevers. I have past the age to which some nations, not without reason, have prescribed so just a term of life, that they would not suffer men to exceed it ; and yet I have some intervals, though short and inconstant, so bright, as are little inferior to the health and indolency of my youth : I do not mean vigour and spriteliness, it being not reason that it should follow me beyond its limits.

*Non hoc amplius est liminis, aut aquæ  
Cœlestis patiens latus \*.*

In life I find it much too late  
To stand all weathers at her gate.

His mind not  
much disturbed  
by the ailments  
of the body.

My face and eyes presently discover me. All my alterations begin there, and appear worse than they really are. My friends oft pity me, before I feel the cause in myself ; my looking-glass does not fright me, for even in my youth it has befallen me more than once to change my countenance, to put on a troubled aspect boding no good, without any great consequence ; in-  
somuch, that the physicians not finding any cause within, answerable to that outward alteration, attributed it to the mind, and some secret passion that preyed upon my vitals ; but they were deceived. If my body governed itself as well according to my wish, as my mind does, we should move a little more at our ease. My mind was then not only free from trouble, but moreover full of satisfaction and joy, as it commonly is, half by complexion, and half by design.

*Nec vitiant artus agræ contagia mentis †.*

\* Hor. lib. iii. ode 10. ver. 19.  
el. 8. ver. 24.

† Ovid. Trist. lib. iii.



————— I never yet could find,  
That e'er my body suffered by my mind \*.

I am of the opinion, that this temperature of my mind, has oft raised my body from its lapses: the latter is often oppressed; and if the former be not brisk and gay, it is at least quiet and at rest. I had a quartan ague four or five months, that made me look wretchedly, while my mind was always, if not calm, yet pleasant; if the pain be without me, the weakness and langour do not much deject me: I have known several corporal fantings, that are shocking so much as to name, which yet I would less fear than a thousand passions and agitations of mind that I frequently see. I resolve no more to run, it is enough that I crawl along; nor do I complain of the natural decay that I feel in myself,

*Quis tumidum guttur miratur in Alpibus † ?*

Who wonders to see a swell'd neck in the Alps ?

nor regret, that my duration shall not be as long and entire as that of an oak.

I have no reason to complain of my imagination, for I have had few thoughts in my life which have so much as broke my sleep, except those of desire, which have awaked without afflicting me: I dream but seldom, and then of chimeras and fantastical things, commonly produced from pleasant thoughts, rather ridiculous than sad; and believe it to be true, that dreams are the

Nor disordered  
by the impres-  
sions of the  
imagination,  
his dreams  
being rather  
ridiculous than  
sad.

\* Montaigne here interprets Ovid's words in a sense opposite to what they carry in that poet; for what he plainly meant to say is, that his mind was not a sufferer by any indisposition of the body.

† Juven. sat. 13. ver. 162.



true interpreters of our inclinations; but there is art required to sort and understand them.

*Rex, quæ in vitâ usurpant homines, cogitant, curant, vident \*, quæque aiunt vigilantes, agitantque, ea si cui in somnô accidunt, minus mirum est †.*

“It is no wonder, O king, if what men are accustomed to think, care for, see, and say, when waking, should also run in their heads, when they are asleep.”

Plato moreover says, that it is the office of prudence to draw instructions of divination of future things from dreams. I see nothing in it, except the wonderful experiments related of them by Socrates, Xenophon, and Aristotle, all men of irreproachable authority ‡. Historians say, that the people of Atlantis never dream, and that they also never eat any thing that had life. I add, forasmuch as it is perhaps the reason why they never dream; for Pythagoras ordered a certain preparation of diet, to beget proper dreams: mine are very gentle, without any agitation of body, or expression of voice. I have seen several of my time wonderfully disturbed by them; Theon the philosopher walked in his sleep; as also did Pericles his servant, and that upon the very tiles and tops of the house ||.

\* This is taken from a tragedy of Accius, intitled Brutus, where a soothsayer addresses Tarquin the superbi; one of the chief dramatic personæ.

† Cicero de Div. lib. i. cap. 22.

‡ Herodot. lib. iv. p. 322.

|| I knew a learned gentleman who affirmed, that the stories of sleep-walkers were true. In Mr. Menage's notes upon this place (in Diogenes Laert. in the life of Pyrrho, lib. ix. sect. 82.) we find a passage of Galen, where this learned physician tells us, that having heard of persons walking in their sleep, he did not believe a word of it, till being obliged once to travel on foot all night long, he was forced to believe it, by his own experience, &c. But according to this principle Galen gives us authority for not believing nothing at all of the matter, till we have experienced it as well as he.

I hardly



I hardly ever chuse my dish at table, but fall too on the next at hand, and unwillingly change it for another. The clatter of plates and services displeases me as much as any other whatever. I am easily satisfied with little fare, and am an enemy to the opinion of Favorinus, that in a feast you must suffer the meat you like to be snatched, and another plate of another sort to be set before you; and that it is a pitiful supper, if you do not stuff your guests with the rumps of various fowls; and that the *béccafico* \* only deserves to be eaten entire. I usually eat salt-meats, yet I chuse bread that has no salt in it; and my baker never sends up other to my table, contrary to the custom of the country. In my infancy, what they had most to correct in me, was the refusal of things that children commonly best love, as sugar, sweet-meats, and marchpanes. My governor opposed this my aversion to dainty fare as a kind of nicety, and indeed it is nothing else but a difficulty of relishing any thing one tastes. Whoever cures a child of a particular aversion to brown bread, bacon, or garlick, cures him of all kind of delicacy. There are some who pretend to work and live hard, that with for powdered beef and bacon amongst partridge; they have a good time of it; it is the delicacy of delicacies, it is the taste of an effeminate fortune; that disrelishes ordinary things, *Per quæ luxuria divitiarum tædio ludit* †. To cease to make good cheer with what another does, and to be curious in what a man eats, is the essence of this vice.

He was not dainty in his diet.

*Si modica canare times plus omne patellâ †.*

If you scorn not a fallad in a mean dish.

\* A small bird, called a fig-pecker, because it feeds upon figs when they are ripe, especially in Piedmont. It sings like a Nightingale, and lives nine ten or years. † Seneca, epist. 18. ‡ Hor. lib. 1. epist. 5. ver. 2.



There is indeed this difference, that it is better to oblige a man's appetite in things that are most easy to be had, but it is always vice to oblige a man's self. I formerly said a kinsman of mine was nice, who, by being in our gallies, had unlearned the use of beds, and to put off his cloaths.

Montaigne was brought up from his cradle in the meanest and most common manner of living.

If I had any sons, I would wish them my fortune. The good father that God gave me, (who has nothing of me but the acknowledgment of his bounty, though truly it is a very hearty one) sent me from my cradle to be brought up in a poor village of his, and there continued me all the while I was at nurse, and longer, bringing me up to the meanest, and common way of living: *Magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter*\*; "a well governed belly is a great part of liberty." Never take upon yourselves, and

That mothers ought not to have the education of their children.

much less give up to your wives, the care of their nurture, leave the forming them to fortune, under popular and natural laws; leave it to custom to train them up to frugality and hardships, that they may rather descend from them, than ascend to them. This humour of my father's yet aimed at another end, that is, to make me familiar with those people, and with that rank of men who most need our assistance; believing that I would be more obliged rather to regard them who extended their arms to me, than those who turned their backs upon me. For this reason also it was, that he provided me sureties at the font, of the meanest fortune, to oblige, and bind me to them.

What was the advantage of this education.

Neither has his design succeeded altogether ill; for, whether it be because there is more honour in such a condescension, or out of natural compassion, which has a very great power over me, I have a kind inclination towards the meaner sort of people. The faction which I condemn in our

\* Seneca, epist. 123.



civil wars, I shall more sharply condemn when I see them flourish and prosper. It will half reconcile me to them, when I shall see them miserable, and suppressed. How much do I admire the generous humour of Chelonis \*, daughter and wife to the kings of Sparta ! Whilst her husband Cleombrotus, in the commotion of her city, had the advantage over Leonidas, her father, she, like a good daughter, stuck close to her father in all his misery and exile in opposition to the conqueror. But so soon as the chance of war turned, she changed her will with the chance of fortune, and bravely turned to her husband's side, whom she accompanied wheresoever his ruin carried him : having, as it appears, no other choice, than to cleave to that side which stood most in need of her, and where she best manifested her compassion. I am naturally more apt to follow the example of Flaminius, who was ready to give his assistance to those that had need of him, than to those who had power to do him good ; than the example of Pyrrhus, who was of an humour to stoop to the great, and to domineer over the meanest sort of people.

The noble humour of Chelonis.

Long sittings at table make me uneasy, and do me harm ; for whether it be for want of more continency, having accustomed myself to it from a child, I eat all the while I sit. Therefore, that at my own house, though the meals there are of the shortest, I chuse to sit down a little while after the rest, as Augustus used to do ; but I do not imitate him in rising also before the rest of the company : on the contrary, I love to sit still a long time after, and to hear the guests talk, provided I am none of the talkers ; for I tire and hurt myself with speaking upon a full stomach, as much as I find it pleasant and very wholesome to argue, and to strain my voice before meals.

Montaigne did not love to sit long at table.

The ancient Greeks and Romans had more reason than we, in setting apart for

Long meals of the ancients.

\* The reader will be pleased to turn to what Plutarch relates of this generous princess in the life of Agis and Cleomenes, chap. 5.



eating, which is a principal action of life, (if not diverted by other extraordinary business) many hours, and the greatest part of the night, eating and drinking more deliberately than we do, who perform all our actions in post-haste; and in extending this natural pleasure to more leisure and better use, intermixing with their meals several pleasant and profitable offices of conversation.

The abstinence  
of which Mon-  
taigne was ca-  
pable.

They whose business it is to take care of me, may easily hinder me from eating any thing they think will do me harm; for in such things I never covet nor miss any thing I do not see. But if it once comes in by sight, it is in vain to urge me to forbear, so that when I design to fast, I must be parted from those that eat suppers, and must have only so much given me, as is required for a regular collation; for if I sit down to table, I forget my resolution. When I order my cook to alter the manner of dressing any dish of meat, all my family know it means, that my stomach is out of order, and that I shall not touch it.

Account of his  
taste, with its  
changes and re-  
volutions.

I love to have all meats that will endure it under-dressed, and love them kept till they have contracted a *baux goût*. Nothing but hardness generally offends me; (of any other quality I am as patient and indifferent as any man I have known) so that, contrary to the common humour, even in fish, it often happens, that I think them both too fresh and too firm: not for want of teeth, which I ever had good, even to excellence, and that which age but now begins to threaten. I have been used to rub them with a napkin every morning, and before and after dinner. God is favourable to those from whom he takes life by degrees; it is the only benefit of old age; the last death will be so much the less visible and painful; it will kill but a quarter of a man; or but half a one at most. I have one tooth lately fallen out without drawing, and without pain: it was the natural term of its duration: both that part of my being, and several others, are already dead, and others half dead, of those that were most active, and in highest esteem during my vigorous years; so



so that I melt and steal away from myself. What a folly would it be in my understanding to apprehend the height of this fall, already so much advanced, as if it were from the utmost precipice? I hope I shall not. Indeed I receive a principal consolation in the thoughts of my death, that it will be just and natural, and that henceforward I cannot herein either require or hope from destiny any favour that is not lawful. Men make themselves believe that their ancestors were taller and had longer lives. But they deceive themselves; and Solon, who was of those old times, nevertheless limits the longest duration of life to threescore and ten years. I, who have so much and so universally adored the *ἀριστον μέτρον*; “the golden mean of the ancient times”; and who have concluded the middle measure to be the most perfect, shall I claim to live to an exceeding old age? Whatever happens contrary to the course of nature, may be troublesome; but what comes according to her, must always be pleasant. *Omnia, quæ secundum naturam sunt, sunt habenda in bonis*\*; “all things that are done according to nature, are to be accounted good.” And so Plato likewise says, that the death which is occasioned by wounds and diseases is violent; but that which old age leads us to is of all others the most easy, and in some sort delightful. *Vitam adolescentibus vis aufert, senibus maturitas*†; “young men are taken away by force, old men by maturity.” Death mixes and confounds itself throughout with life; decay anticipates its hour, and even increases as we grow up. I have pictures of myself taken at twenty-five, and thirty-five years of age; I compare them with that lately drawn, how often is it no more me, how much more is my present image unlike the former, and how unlike to that I shall go out of the world with? It is too great an abuse of nature, to harass her so that she must be forced to leave us; and to abandon our conduct, our eyes, teeth, legs, and all the rest, to the mercy of a foreign and solicited assistance; and to resign ourselves into the hands

\* Cicero de Senect. cap. 19.

† Ibid.



of art, when she is weary of following us. I am not very fond either of sallads, or fruits, except melons. My father hated all sorts of sauces, and I love them all. Eating too much is a clog to me, but for the quality of what I eat, I do not yet certainly know that any sort of meat hurts me; neither have I observed that either full-moon or decrease, spring or autumn, alter me. We have in us motions that are inconstant, and for which we cannot account. For example, I found radishes first agreeable, afterwards nauseous, and now again grateful. In several other things likewise I find my stomach and appetite vary after the same manner. I have changed and changed again from white-wine to claret, from claret to white-wine.

Montaigne was fond of fish, and did not love to mix it with flesh.

I am a great lover of fish, and consequently make my fasts feasts, and my feasts fasts; and believe what some people say, that it is more easy of digestion than flesh. As I make a conscience of eating flesh upon fish-days, so does my taste make a scruple of mixing fish and flesh, the difference betwixt them seeming to me to be too great,

Why he sometimes fasted.

From my youth I have used sometimes to skip my meals, either to sharpen my appetite against the next day, (for as Epicurus fasted and lived on meagre food to accustom his pleasure to make shift without abundance, I on the contrary do it to prepare my pleasure to make better and more chearful use of abundance) or else I fasted to preserve my vigour for the service of some action of body or mind; for both the one and the other are cruelly dulled in me by repletion (and above all things, I hate that foolish coupling of so healthful and sprightly a goddess with that little undigested belching deity, all over bloated by the fume of his liquor) or to cure my sick stomach, and for want of fit company. For I say as the same Epicurus did, that a man is not so much to regard what he eats, as with whom; and I commend Chilo\*, for not engaging himself to be at Periander's

\* In Plutarch's Banquet of the seven wise Men,



feast, till he first was informed who were to be the other guests. No dish is so acceptable to me, nor no sauce so alluring, as that which is extracted from society. I think it more wholesome to eat less at a time and often : but I desire to make the most of appetite and hunger. I would take no pleasure to be stinted in the physical way to three or four pitiful meals a day. Who will assure me, that if I have a good appetite in the morning, I shall have the same at supper? But especially, let us old fellows take the first opportunity of eating, and leave hopes and prognostics to the makers of almanacks. The utmost fruit of my health is pleasure ; let us take hold of the first that offers. I avoid constancy in these laws of fasting. Whoever desires that one form shall serve him, let him avoid the continuing of it : we harden ourselves in it ; our faculties are laid asleep by it ; six months after, you shall find your stomach so used to it, that all your gain will be the loss of your liberty of doing otherwise, but to your prejudice.

I never keep my legs and thighs warmer in winter than in summer ; one single pair of silk stockings is all : I have suffered myself to keep my head warmer for the relief of my rheums, and my belly upon the account of my cholic : my diseases were in a few days habituated to it, and disdained my ordinary provisions. I rose from a single cap to a napkin, and from a napkin-cap to a quilted one. The waddings of my doublet serve only for shew ; they signify nothing, if I do not add a hare's skin or that of a vultur, and wear a cap under my hat. Follow this gradation, and you will go a fine length. I am resolved to proceed no further, and would leave off those too, if I durst. If you fall into any new inconvenience, all this is labour lost ; you are accustomed to it ; seek out some other way : thus do such ruin themselves, who submit to be fettered, and superstitiously confined to rules. They are for adding something more, and something more after that, so that there is no end of it.

*Rules which he observed with regard to his cloathing.*



His preference  
of dinners to  
suppers; and  
the measure he  
observed in his  
liquor.

As for our occupations and pleasures, it is much more commodious, as the ancients did, to lose a dinner, and defer making good cheer, till the hour of retirement and repose, without breaking into the day; and so was I formerly used to do. For health, I since by experience find on the contrary, that it is better to dine, and that the digestion is better performed waking. I am not very apt to be thirsty, either well or sick, my mouth is indeed apt to be dry, but without thirst; and commonly I never drink but from a desire that is created by eating, and when I have gone a good way in my meal. I drink pretty well for a man of the common sort: in summer, and at a hungry meal, I not only exceed the limits of Augustus, who drank just thrice and no more; but not to offend Democritus's rule, who forbade that men should stop at four times, as an unlucky number, I proceed when need requires to the fifth glass, in all about three half pints. For the little glasses are my favourites; and I love to drink them off at once, which other people avoid as indecent. I mix my wine most commonly with half, sometimes one third part water; and when I am at home, by an ancient custom that my father's physician prescribed both to him, and to himself, they mix that which is designed for me in the pantry two or three hours before it is brought in. It is said, that Cranaus king of Athens was the inventor of this custom of dashing wine with water; whether profitable or no, I have heard disputed. I think it more decent and wholesome for children to drink no wine till after sixteen or eighteen years of age. The most usual and common method of living is the most becoming: all particularity is in my opinion to be avoided, and I would as much hate a German that mixed water with his wine, as I would a Frenchman who drank it pure. Common custom gives the law in those things.

His notion with  
regard to air.

I fear a foggy air, and fly from smog, as from the plague, (the first repairs I fell upon in my own house were the chimnies and privies, a com-



a common and insupportable defect in all old buildings) and amongst the hardships of war, reckon the choking dust, with which we are smothered a whole day together. I have a free and easy respiration, and my colds for the most part go off without offence to the lungs, and without a cough.

The severe heat of summer is more an enemy to me than the cold of winter; for, besides the inconvenience of heat, not so remediable as cold, and besides the force with which the sun-beams dart upon the head, their glaring light offends my eyes, so that I could not now sit at dinner over-against a great fire.

He could bear very cold weather better than hot.

To dull the whiteness of paper, in those times when I was more used to read, I laid a piece of glass upon my book, and found my eyes much relieved by it. I am to this hour ignorant of the use of spectacles, and can see as far as ever I did, or as any other person. It is true, that in the evening I begin to find a little trouble and weakness in my sight, if I read; an exercise that always strained my eyes, especially by night. Here is one step backwards, and a very sensible one: I shall fall back another, from the second to the third, and so to the fourth, so gently, that I shall be stark blind before I shall be sensible of the age and decay of my sight: so artificially do the fatal sisters untwist the thread of our lives. Yet I doubt that my hearing begins to grow thick, and you will see I shall have half lost it, when I shall lay the fault on the voices of those that speak to me. The soul must be exceedingly intent to be sensible how it ebbs away. My walking is quick and firm, and I know not which of the two, my mind, or my body, I have most to do to keep in the same state. That preacher is very much my friend, that can oblige my attention a whole sermon through. In places of ceremony, where every one's countenance is so starched, where I have seen the ladies keep even their eyes so fixt, I could never order it so, that some part or other of me did not lash out; so that though

He had a very long sight, but apt to be weakened by the exercise of it.



though I was set, I was never settled; as the philosopher Chrysippus's \* chamber-maid said of her master, that he was only drunk in his legs, for it was his custom to be always kicking them about in what place soever he sat, and she said it at a time when though the wine made all his companions drunk, he found no alteration in himself at all; the same may also be said of me from my infancy, that I have either folly or quicksilver in my feet, so much restlessness and unsettledness there is in them wherever they are placed.

He was too greedy in his eating.

It is indecent, besides the hurt it doth to one's health, and even to the pleasure of eating, to eat so greedily as I do: I oft bite my tongue, and sometimes my fingers for haste. Diogenes meeting a boy eating after that manner, gave his tutor a box on the ear. There were men at Rome that taught people to chew, as well as to walk, with a good grace. I thereby lose the opportunity of speaking, which gives so sweet a relish to meals, provided the table-talk be pleasant and short.

His judgment concerning the pleasures of the table.

There is jealousy and envy amongst our pleasures, they cross and hinder one another. Alcibiades, a man well versed in making good cheer, banished even music from tables, that it might not disturb the pleasure of discourse, for a reason he had from Plato, viz. that it is the custom of vulgar men to call fiddlers and singing-men to feasts, for want of good discourse and pleasant talk, with which men of understanding know how to regale one another. Varro requires this in great entertainments, persons of graceful presence, and agreeable conversation, that are neither mute nor rattles; neatness and delicacy both of place and provisions, and fair weather. A good treat is neither slightly artificial, nor a little voluptuous; neither the greatest captains, nor the greatest philosophers, have disdained the use and science of eating well. My imagination has delivered three to my memory, which fortune rendered sovereignly

\* Diog. Laert. in the life of Chrysippus, lib. vii,



sweet to me upon divers occasions, in my most flourishing age. My present state excludes me from more. For every one, according to the good temper of body and mind wherein he then finds himself, furnishes to his own use a particular grace and liking; I, who but just crawl upon the earth, hate this inhuman wisdom, that will have us despise and hate all the culture of body. I look upon it to be as unjust to hate natural pleasures, as to be too fond of them. Xerxes was such a fool that when environed with all human pleasures, he proposed a reward to him that could find him out a new one; and he is not less so, who denies himself any of those pleasures that nature has provided for him. A man should neither pursue nor fly, but receive them. I receive them I confess a little too affectionately and kindly, and easily suffer myself to follow my natural inclination. We need not exaggerate their vanity, they themselves shew it, and make us sufficiently sensible of it. Thanks be to our sickly minds that pall our joys, and put us out of taste with them, as with themselves, they entertain both themselves and all they receive, one while better, and another while worse, according to their insatiable, vagabond, and variable essence.

*Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcumque infundis, acescit †.*

All pleasures shun with sorrow in their train,  
For tainted vessels shew what they contain.

I, who boast that I so curiously and particularly embrace the conveniencies of life, find, when I nicely consider them, but very little in them more than wind. But what? We are all wind throughout; and moreover, the wind itself loves to bluster and shift from corner to corner more discreetly than we, and contents itself with its proper offices, without desiring stability and solidity, qualities that do not belong to it.

† Hor. lib. i. ep. 2. ver. 54.



In what rank he placed the pleasures of the imagination and those of the body.

The pure pleasures, as well as the pure displeasures of the imagination, say some, are the greatest; as was expressed by the balance of Critolaus\*. It is no wonder; it makes them to its own liking, and cuts what it pleases out of the whole cloth; of which I every day see notable examples, and perhaps to be desired. But I, who am of a mixt and heavy constitution, cannot snap so soon at this one simple object, but I negligently suffer myself to be blindly carried away with the present pleasures of the general human law. Intellectually sensible, and sensibly intellectual. The Cyrenaic philosophers will have it, that as corporeal pains, so corporeal pleasures are more powerful, both as double, and more just. There are some, as Aristotle says, who out of a savage kind of stupidity pretend to disgust them: and I know others, who out of ambition do the same. Why do they not likewise forswear breathing? Why do they not live of their own; and refuse light because it shines gratis, and cost them neither pains nor invention? Let Mars, Pallas, or Mercury, afford them their light by which to see, instead of Venus, Ceres, and Bacchus. Will they not seek the quadrature of the circle, even in their conjugal embraces? I hate that we should be enjoined to have our minds in the clouds when our bodies are at table; I would not have the mind rivetted there, nor that it should be roving, but I am willing it should apply itself to that place, that it should sit, but not lie down there. Aristippus pleaded only for the body, as if we had no soul; Zeno stickled only for the soul, as if we had no body. Both of them were in the wrong. Pythagoras, say they, adhered to a philosophy that was all contemplation; Socrates to one that was all manners and action. Plato found out a medium betwixt both; but they only say so for talk sake; for the true mean is found in Socrates;

\* In my opinion Montaigne here applies this balance to a purpose very different from that which Critolaus applied it to, if we may judge of this balance by what Cicero says of it. *Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 27.*



and Plato is more Socratic than Pythagorean, and it becomes him better. When I dance, I dance; when I sleep, I sleep. Nay, when I walk alone in a beautiful orchard, if my thoughts are some part of the time taken up with foreign occurrences, I call them back again to my walk, or to the orchard, to the sweetness of the solitude, and to myself.

Nature has with a motherly tenderness observed this, that the actions she has enjoined us for our necessity should be also pleasant to us, and invites us to them, not only by reason, but also by appetite: and it is injustice to pervert her laws. When

Nature has rendered those actions agreeable which man is under a necessity of performing.

I see both Cæsar and Alexander in the most weighty concerns of their great business, so fully enjoy human and corporeal pleasures, I do not say that they unbent their minds, but strained them higher; subjecting those violent employments and laborious thoughts by the strength of courage, to the custom of common life. Wise, had they believed that the former was their ordinary, the latter, their extraordinary vocation. We are great fools. He has past over his life in indolence, say we: I have done nothing to-day. What! have you not lived? It is not only the fundamental, but the most illustrious of your occupations. Had I been put to the management of great affairs, I would have made it seen what I could do. Have you known how to meditate, and manage your life? You have performed the greatest work of all. For a man to shew, and see himself off, nature has no need of fortune; she equally shews herself in all degrees, and behind a curtain, as well as without one. Have you known how to compose your manners? You have done a great deal more than he who has composed books. Have you known how to take repose? You have done more than he who has taken cities and empires.

The glorious master-piece of man is to know how to live to purpose: all other things, viz. to reign, to lay up treasure,

What is man's true master-piece.

and



and to build, are at the most but little appendices, and small props. I take a delight to see a general of an army at the foot of a breach he intends presently to assault, give himself up entire and free at dinner, to talk and be merry with his friends; and to see Brutus, when heaven and earth conspired against him and the Roman liberty, stealing some hour of the night from his rounds to read and abridge Polybius, void of all fear. It is for little souls, that are crushed under the weight of affairs, not to know how cleverly to disengage themselves, and not to know how to lay them aside, and take them up again.

*Of fortes, pejoraque passi,  
Mecum sæpe viri, nunc vino pellite curas.  
Cras ingens iterabimus æquor\*.*

Brave spirits, who with me have felt worse sorrow,  
Drink cares away, we'll sail again to-morrow.

Whether it be in jest or earnest, that the theological and Sorbonnical wine, and their feasts, are turned into a proverb, I think it but reason, they should dine so much more commodiously and pleasantly as they have profitably and seriously employed the morning in the exercise of their schools. The conscience of having well spent the other hours is the just and savoury sauce of tables. The sages lived so, and that inimitable emulation for virtue, which astonishes us both in the one and the other Cato, that humour of theirs, severe even to importunity, is thus gently submitted, and made pliant to the laws of the human condition, both of Venus and Bacchus; and according to the precepts of their sect, that require the perfect wise man should be as expert and intelligent in

\* Hor. lib. i. ode 7. ver. 30.



the use of pleasures, as in all other duties of life. *Cui cor sapiat, ei et sapiat palatus* \*.

Relaxation and affability, methinks, wonderfully honour, and best become a great and generous soul. Epaminondas did not think, that to dance, sing, and be intent upon play with the boys of his city, derogated from the honour of his glorious victories, and the perfect reformation of manners that was in him. And amongst so many admirable actions of Scipio, the grandfather, a person worthy the opinion of a heavenly extraction, there is nothing that gives him a greater grace than to see him indolently and childishly trifling, in gathering and chusing shells, and playing at quoits upon the seashore with Lælius : and, if it was foul weather, amusing and pleasing himself in writing comedies, representing the meanest and most popular actions of mankind : and while his head was full of that wonderful enterprize of Hannibal and Africa, visiting the schools in Sicily, and being present at the philosophical lectures, even so as to attract the blind envy of his enemies at Rome. Nor is there any thing more remarkable in Socrates, than that, old as he was, he found time to learn dancing, and playing upon instruments, and thought it well spent ; nevertheless, this very man was seen in extasy standing upon his feet a whole day and a night together in the presence of all the Grecian army, surpris'd and transported with some profound thought. He was the first, who among so many valiant men of the army, ran to the relief of Alcibiades, overpowered by the enemy, screened him with his own body, and disengaged him from the crowd by absolute force of arms. It was he who, in the Delian battle relieved and saved Xenophon, when dismount-

Relaxation and affability specially becoming great and generous souls.

\* Cicero de Finibus, Bon. et Mal. lib. ii. cap. 9.



ed from his horse ; and who, amongst all the people of Athens, enraged as he was at so unworthy a spectacle, first presented himself to rescue Theramenes, whom the thirty tyrants were dragging to execution by their guards ; and desisted not from his bold enterprize, but at the remonstrance of Theramenes himself, though he was only followed by two more in all. He has been seen, when courted by a beauty, with whom he was deeply in love, yet maintain a severe abstinence in time of need. He has been seen continually to go to the war, and with his bare feet to travel upon the ice ; to wear the same garb winter and summer ; to surpass all his companions in bearing hardships ; and to eat no more at a feast, than at his own private dinner. He was known 27 years together to endure hunger, poverty, the untractableness of his children, and the scratches of his wife, with the same countenance ; and in the end calumny, tyranny, imprisonment, fetters, and poison. But was that man invited to drink bumpers by any rule of civility ? He was also the man of the army to whom the advantage of it remained. And he never refused to play at cobnut, nor to ride the hobby-horse with the boys, and it became him well ; for all actions, says philosophy, equally become, and equally honour a wise man. We have enough wherewith to do it, and we ought never to be weary of representing the image of this great man in all the patterns and forms of perfection. There are very few examples of life full and pure, and we wrong our instruction to propose to ourselves every day, such as are weak and imperfect, scarce good for any one service, and such as draw us rather back, and that are rather corrupters than correctors of manners. The people deceive themselves ; a man goes much more easily indeed by the ends, where the extremity serves for a bound, a stop, and a guide, than by the middle way, which is large and open, and more according to art than nature ; but much less nobly and commendably.

Magnani-



Magnanimity consists not so much in mounting and in proceeding forward, as in knowing how to govern and circumscribe itself. It takes every thing for great, that is enough; and demonstrates itself better in moderate, than eminent things. There is nothing so handsome and lawful, as well and duly to act the part of the man; nor any science so difficult, as to know how to live; and of all our infirmities, it is the most savage, to despise our being.

What discovers  
the greatness  
of a soul.

Whoever has a mind to send his soul abroad, when the body is ill at ease, to preserve it from the contagion, let him do it if he can: but otherwise on the contrary, let the souls favour and assist the body, and not refuse to participate of its natural pleasures, and with a conjugal complacency; using whoever, if it be a wise soul, moderation, lest by indiscretion they should be confounded with vexation. Intemperance is the best of pleasure, and temperance is not its scourge, but rather its seasoning. Eudoxus\*, who therein established the sovereign good, and his companions, who set so high a value upon it, tasted it in its most charming sweetness by the means of temperance, which in them was singular and exemplary †.

It ought not to  
shun natural  
pleasures, but  
to taste them with  
moderation.

I enjoin my soul to look upon pain and pleasure with an eye equally regulated and steadfast; *Eodem enim vitio est effusio animi in lætitia, quo in dolore contractio* ‡; “the  
“ overflowing of the heart in mirth, is as  
“ bad as the contracting of it in sorrow;” but on the one gaily, and on the other gravely, and as far as it is able,

How we ought  
to behave with  
regard both to  
pain and  
pleasure.

\* As Diog. Leart. affirms in the life of Eudoxus (lib. viii. § 88) on the report of Nicomachus, the son of Aristotle.

† Aristotle positively says that Eudoxus was distinguished by his extraordinary temperance. Moral. ad Nicomachum, lib. x. cap. 2.

‡ Cicero Tusc. lib. iv. cap. 31.



to be as careful to extinguish the one, as to extend the other. The judging rightly of good, brings along with it the judging soundly of evil. Pain has something not to be avoided in its tender beginning, and pleasure has something that may be avoided in its excessive end. Plato couples them together ‡, and will have it that it should be equally the office of fortitude to fight against pain, and against the immoderate and charming blandishments of pleasure. They are two fountains, from which whoever draws, when and as much as he needs, whether city, man, or beast, is very happy. The first is to be taken physically, and upon necessity more sparingly; the other for thirst, but not to drunkenness. Pain, pleasure, love, and hatred, are the first things that a child is sensible of; if when his reason comes they are applied to it, that is virtue.

The use Montaigne made of life.

I have a dictionary to my myself, I squander away my time when it is ill and uneasy; but when it is good, I will not squander it away. I run it over again, and stick to it; a man must run over the ill, and settle upon the good. This ordinary phrase of pastime, and passing away the time, represents the custom of those wise people, who think they cannot fare better than to let life run on and slide away, to pass it over, to kill it, and as much as they can, to take no notice of it, and to steal from it, as a thing of a troublesome and contemptible quality. But I know it to be another kind of thing, and find it both valuable and commodious, even in its latest decay, wherein I now enjoy it: and nature has delivered it into our hands in such and so favourable circumstances, that we need only thank ourselves if it be troublesome to us, or slide unprofitable away. *Stulti vita ingrata est, trepida est, tota in futurum fertur* †; “the life of a fool is uneasy, timorous, and wholly bent upon futurity.” Ne-

‡ In his Dialogue of the Laws, lib. i. p. 636.

† Seneca, epist. 15.



vertheless, I compose myself to lose mine without regret, but yet as a thing that is perishable by its condition, not that it is troublesome or uneasy to me. Neither does it properly well become any, to welcome death, excepting such as are fond of life. There is good husbandry in enjoying it. I enjoy it double to what others do; for the measure of the fruition depends more or less upon our application of it. Now, especially, that I perceive mine to be so short in time, I am inclined to extend it in weight: I will stop the quickness of its flight \*, by the suddenness of my grasping it: and by the vigour of using it, make myself amends for the haste in which it runs away. By how much the possession of life is more short, I must take the deeper and the fuller hold of it. Others are sensible of the sweetness of contentment, and of prosperity; I feel it too, as well as they, but not as it slides and passes by; for a man ought to study, taste, and ruminate upon it, to render due thanks for it to him that grants it to us. They enjoy the other pleasures as they do that of sleep, the without knowing them; and to end, that even sleep itself should not so stupidly pass me unnoticed, I have formerly caused myself to be disturbed in it, to the end that I might take a view of it. I ponder with myself upon contentment; I do not skim over it, but sound it, and bend my reason, now grown perverse and disgusted, to recover it. Do I find myself in any calm situation? Is there any pleasure that tickles me? I do not suffer it to cheat my

\* This perhaps furnished the hint for the following merry French catch, viz.

Plus inconstant que l'Onde et la Nuage,  
 Le Temps s'enfuit: pourquoi le regretter?  
 Malgré la pente volage  
 Que l'oblige à nous quitter,  
 En faire l'usage c'est l'arrêter;  
 Goutons mille douceurs:  
 Et si la vie est un passage,  
 Sur ce passage au moins semons des fleurs.



senses. I associate my soul to it, not to be absorbed in it, but to take delight in it; not to lose itself, but to find itself in it; and I employ it on its part to view itself in this prosperous estate, to weigh, esteem, and amplify its happiness. It computes how much it stands indebted to almighty God that its conscience, and other intestine passions are at rest, that the body is in its natural disposition, orderly and competently enjoying the delicate and flattering functions, by which he is graciously pleased to recompense the sufferings wherewith his justice in its turn scourges us. How great a benefit is it to man to have his soul so seated, that which way soever she turns her eye, the heaven is calm about her? No desire, no fear or doubt, that troubles its aspect, nor any difficulty past, present, or to come, which his imagination may not pass over, without offence. This consideration derives great lustre from the comparison of different conditions; and therefore it is, that I propose to myself in a thousand faces, those whom fortune, or their own error, torments and carries away; and moreover those, who more like to me, so negligently and carelessly receive their good fortune. They are men who pass away their time indeed, they run over the present, and that which they possess, to give themselves up to hope, and to the shadows and vain images, which fancy places before them,

*Morte obitâ quales fama est volitare figuras,  
Aut quæ sopitos deludunt somnia sensus \*.*

Such forms they say as dead men's spirits have,  
Or which in dreams our drowsy sense deceive.

and which hasten and prolong their flight, according as they are pursued. The fruit and aim of their pursuit is

\* Æneid. lib. x. ver. 641.



to pursue; as Alexander said, that the end of his labour, was to labour.

*Nil actum credens cum quid superesset agendum †.*

Thinking nought done, if ought was left to do.

For my part therefore I love life, and cultivate it, such as it has pleased God to bestow upon us; I do not offer to wish it had no necessity of eating and drinking; and I would think my offence as inexcusable, to wish it had been double to what it is. *Sapiens divitiarum naturalium quæstor acerrimus ‡*; “a wise man hunts sharply after “natural riches.” Nor that we should support ourselves by putting only a little of that drug into our mouths by which Epimenides took away his appetite, and kept himself alive; nor that a man should stupidly produce children, with his fingers or heels, but rather with reverence I speak it, that he might voluptuously produce them with his fingers and heels; nor that the body should be without desire, and void of delight. These are ungrateful and wicked complaints. I accept kindly and gratefully, what nature has done for me; am well pleased with it, and proud of it. A man does wrong to the great and almighty Giver of all things, to refuse, disannul, or disfigure his gift; he has made every thing well. *Omnia quæ secundum naturam sunt estimatione digna sunt §*; “all things that are according to “nature are worthy of esteem.”

Of philosophical opinions, I more willingly embrace those that are most solid, that is to say, the most humane,

His discourses  
like his deport-  
ment.

† Lucan. lib. ii. ver. 657. The poet speaks here of Cæsar, who was altogether as active and indefatigable as Alexander.

‡ Seneca, epist. 119. § Cicero de Finib. lib. iii. c. 6. We find the sense here to be the same, though not the very words as quoted by Montaigne.



and most our own: my discourses, are fuitable to my manners, low and humble: philosophy brings forth a child to my liking, when it puts itself upon its *ergo's*, to prove that it is a savage alliance to match divine with earthly, rational with irrational, severe with indulgent, and the honest with dishonest; that pleasure is a brutish quality, unworthy to be tasted by a wise man; that the sole pleasure which he extracts from the enjoyment of a fair young wife, is the pleasure of his conscience to perform an action according to order: as to put on his boots for a profitable journey. Oh, that his followers had no more right, nor nerves, nor juice, in getting their wives maidenheads, than there is in his lectures.

Corporeal pleasure has its value, though it is inferior to that of the mind.

This is not what Socrates says, who is both his master and ours. He values, as he ought, bodily pleasure, but he prefers that of the mind, as having more force, constancy, facility, variety, and dignity. This according to him goes by no means alone, he is not so fantastic, but only it goes first. Temperance in him is the moderatrix, not the adversary of pleasures. Nature is a gentle guide, but not more gentle, than prudent and just. *Intrandum est in rerum naturam, et penitus quid ea postulet, pervidendum* †; “a man must search into the nature of things, and examine thoroughly what she requires.” I every where search for the print of her foot, but we have confounded it with artificial traces. That sovereign Académic and Peripatetic good, which is to live according to nature, becomes by this means hard to limit and explain: and that of the Stoics, bordering upon it, which is to consent to nature. Is it not an error to esteem any action less worthy, because they are necessary? Yet they shall not beat it out of my head, that it is not a fuitable marriage of pleasure with necessity, to which

† Cicero de Fin. lib. v. cap. 16.



says an ancient, the gods always consent. To what end do we dismember by divorce, a fabric connected by so mutual and fraternal a correspondence: let us, on the contrary renew it by mutual offices, let the mind rouse and quicken the dulness of the body, and the body stop and fix the levity of the soul. *Qui velut summum bonum, laudat animæ naturam, et tanquam malum, naturam carnis accusat, profecto et animam carnaliter appetit, et carnem carnaliter fugit, quoniam id vanitate sentit humanâ, non veritate divinâ\**; “ he who  
 “ commends the nature of the soul as the supreme  
 “ good, and accuses the nature of the flesh as evil,  
 “ does certainly both carnally affect the soul, and car-  
 “ nally flies the flesh, because he is possessed by such  
 “ belief through human vanity, and not by divine  
 “ truth.” In this present that God has made us, there is nothing unworthy our care; we are strictly accountable for it. And it is no slight commission to man, to conduct man according to his condition. It is express, simple, and the principal of all; and the Creator has seriously and severely enjoined it. Authority has alone the power to work upon common understandings, and is of more weight in a foreign language, and therefore let us again charge with it in this place. *Stultitiæ proprium quis non dixerit, ignavè, et contumaciter facere quæ facienda sunt; et aliò corpus impellere, aliò animum, distrabique inter diversissimos motus †?* “ who  
 “ will not say, that it is the property of folly, slothfully  
 “ and contumaciously to perform what is to be done,  
 “ and to bend the body one way, and the mind another, so as to be distracted betwixt the most different motions?” Which to make apparent, let any one some day tell you what whimsies and imaginations he puts into his own pate, and upon the account of which he diverted his thoughts from a good meal,

\* Aug. de Civitate Dei, lib. xiv. cap. 5. where he has a view properly to the Manichees, who held the flesh and the body to be the production of the evil principle.

† Senec. epist. 74.



and complained of the time he spends in eating : you will find there is nothing so insipid in all the dishes at your table, as this fine talk of his, (for generally we had better sleep than wake to the purpose we do :) and that his discourses and notions are not so good as your fricassée. Though they were the raptures of Archimedes himself, what were they worth ? I do not here speak of, nor mix with the rabble of us ordinary men; and the vanity of the thoughts and desires that divert us, those venerable souls, elevated by the ardour of devotion and religion, to a constant, and conscientious meditation of divine things, who, by a lively endeavour, and vehement hope, having a foretaste of the eternal nourishment, the final aim, and the last stop of Christian desires, the sole, constant, and incorruptible pleasure, disdain all regard to our beggarly, frothy, and ambiguous conveniencies, and easily resign to the body the care and use of sensual and temporal food. It is a privileged study. I have ever amongst us observed supercelestial opinions, and subterranean manners to be of singular accord.

The folly of  
that man who  
aspires to be  
above what  
he is.

Æsop, that great man, saw his master piss as he walked : “ what,” said he, “ must we dung too as we run ?” Let us manage our time as well as we can, there will yet remain a great deal that will be idle, and ill-employed. The mind has not other hours enough by its choice, wherein to do its business, without disassociating itself from the body, in that little space it requires for its necessity. They aim to put themselves out of themselves, and to escape from being men. What folly in this ! Instead of transforming themselves into angels, they transform themselves into beasts, and instead of elevating themselves they sink. These transcendent humours affright me, like places that are high and inaccessible : and nothing is hard for me to digest in the life of Socrates but his ecstasies and communication with dæmons. Nothing is so human in Plato as that for which  
they



they say he was called divine. And of our sciences, those seem to be the most terrestrial and low that are highest mounted. I find nothing so humble and mortal in the life of Alexander as his fancies about his immortalization. Philotas pleasantly jeered him in his answer. He congratulated him by letter upon the oracle of Jupiter Ammon's having placed him amongst the Gods; "for thy sake I am glad of it," said he, "but the men are to be pitied," who are to live with a man, and to obey him, who exceeds, and is not contented with the measure of a man. *Diis te minorem quod geris, imperas*\*; "because thou carriest thyself lower than the gods, thou dost command men." The pretty inscription wherewith the Athenians honoured the entry of Pompey into their city is conformable to my sense.

*D'autant es tu dieu, comme  
Tu te recognois homme †.*

So much thou hast of deity  
As thou dost own of man in thee.

It is absolute, and as it were, a divine perfection, for a man to know how to enjoy his being, as he ought. We seek other conditions, by reason we do not understand the use of our own; and go out of ourselves, for want of knowing what we do. It is to much purpose to go upon stilts, for when upon stilts, we must yet walk with our legs: and when seated upon the most elevated throne in the world, we are but seated upon our breech. The fairest lives, in my opinion, are those which regularly accommodate themselves to the common and human model: yet without miracle, and without extravagance. but old age stands a little in need of more tender treatment. Let us recommend it to God, the protector of health and wisdom, but yet let it be gay and sociable:

\* Hor. lib. iii. ode 6. ver. 5.  
† In the life of Pompey, by Plutarch, chap. 7.

† In the life of Pompey, by Plutarch, chap. 7.



*Frui paratis et valido mihi  
 Latæ dones, et precor integrâ  
 Cum mente, nec turpem senectam  
 Degere, nec cythara carentem †.*

Grant this Apollo, and I ask no more,  
 A mind to use my present store  
 With health and life, but not so long  
 As brings contempt, and cramps my song.

† Horace, lib. i. ode 31. ver. 17, &c.

*The End of the Third and last Book of  
 MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.*



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# A P P E N D I X:

Containing Six Letters from MONTAIGNE, which never appeared before in any Edition of his ESSAYS, nor any where else, except in a small Collection; now extremely scarce, which MONTAIGNE published with the Royal Privilege at Paris, A. D. 1571.

## L E T T E R: I.

*An Introduction of BOETIA'S Translation of XENOPHON'S Treat, intituled OECONOMY; To monsieur DE LANSAC, Knight of the King's Order, a Member of his Privy Council, Superintendant of his Finances, and Captain of the Hundred Gentlemen of his Household.*

SIR,

I Send you Xenophon's oeconomy translated into French by the late Monsieur de la Boetia, a present which I thought very proper for you, not only for its coming in the first place, as you know, from the hand of a person of distinction, a very great man both in war and peace; but for having taken its second form from that person, whom I am certain you both loved and esteemed as long as he lived. This treatise will be a constant inducement to the continuance of your favourable opinion and goodwill to his name and memory. And I will be bold to say that you need not fear the making any addition to your regard for him since as you took a liking to him only from the public testimonies of his character, it is incumbent on me to assure you that he had so many degrees of ability beyond common fame, that you are very far from knowing him thoroughly. He did me the honour, which I rank with the greatest blessings of my fortune, to form so strict and close a connection of friendship with me, that unless my sight at any time failed me, there was not  
a bias,



a bias, motive, or spring in his soul, which I could not discern and judge of. But without offence to the truth, he was, take him altogether, so wonderful a man, that lest my word should not be taken for any thing, if I once transgress the bounds of probability, I am forced in speaking of him to constrain and contract myself short of the extent of what I know of him. And for this time, sir, I shall barely content myself with intreating you, for the honour and veneration which you owe to the truth, to believe and testify that our Guyenne never saw his fellow amongst the gentlemen of his robe. In hopes therefore, that you render him that which is most justly due to him, and with a view to keep him fresh in your memory, I present you this book, which at the same time will satisfy you on my part, that had not my insufficiency laid me under an express prohibition to do it, I would have been as ready to present you with something of my own, as an acknowledgement of the obligations which I am under to you, and of that favour and friendship which you have for a long time shewn to our family. But, sir, for want of better coin I offer you in payment the sincerest tender of my humble service.

Sir, I beg God to protect you, and am

Your obedient servant,

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE,

## L E T T E R . II.

*An Introduction of BOETIA'S Translation of PLUTARCH'S Rules of Marriage. A Monsieur Monsieur DE MESMES, Lord DE ROISSY et DE MAL-ASSIZE, a member of the King's Privy Council,*

SIR

**I**T is one of the most remarkable follies which men are guilty of, to exert the whole force of their understanding to give a shock and an overthrow to opinions, that are commonly received, and such too as yield us satisfaction and content. For whereas every thing under heaven employs the means and instruments with which nature has



has furnished it, for the ornament and conveniency of its being, these men, that they may seem to be of a more gay and sprightly disposition, not capable of admitting and entertaining any thing but what has been a thousand times touched and poised in the nicest balance of reason, shake their minds out of a calm and easy situation for the sake of possessing them, after a long enquiry, with doubt, uneasiness, and fluctuation. It is not without reason that childhood and simplicity have been so much recommended by truth itself. For my part, I had rather be more at my ease, with less ability; more contented, with less understanding. Therefore, sir, though the men of most refined parts laugh at our concern for what may pass in the world after we are departed from it, as if the soul when lodged elsewhere had no longer any feeling for things below, yet I think it is a great comfort with respect to the frailty and short space of this life, to think that it is capable of being strengthened and prolonged by fame and reputation; and I most heartily give into so pleasant and favourable an opinion, which is innate in us, without a curious enquiry into the how or the wherefore. From hence it is, that as I loved no mortal so well as M. de la Boetia, the greatest man of this age in my opinion, I would think it a gross failure of my duty if I wittingly suffered a character so fragrant and so worthy of recommendation as his to vanish and slip out of my remembrance, and if I did not upon that score attempt to revive and raise him again to life. I believe that he is sensible of it in some measure, and that these efforts of mine affect and please him. In truth, he still lodges in my breast so entire and so lively that I cannot think him so deeply under ground, nor so totally removed from our correspondence. Now, sir, because every fresh discovery which I make of his person and character is as multiplication of this second life of his, and because his name is ennobled and honoured from the place that receives it, it is incumbent on me not only to cause it to be propagated to the utmost of my power, but also to recommend it to the care of persons of honour and virtue, in the number whereof you have so high a station, that in  
order



order to afford you an opportunity of receiving this new guest, and giving him a good welcome, I chose to present you with this small work, not for any service that you may reap from it, being very sure that you have no need of an interpreter, to converse with Plutarch and his companions; but it is possible that madame de Roissy, when she sees the decorum in her household, and your good harmony represented to the life, will be well pleased to find her natural disposition, not only to have attained to, but even to have surmounted what the wisest philosophers have been able to conceive of the duty and laws of marriage. And in all cases, I shall ever esteem it an honour if it lies in my power, to do any thing that may give you or yours a pleasure; such is my obligation to serve you,

Sir, I pray God to give you a life long and happy,  
being

Montaigne,  
April 30, 1570.

Your humble servant,

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE.

### L E T T E R III.

*Printed before BOETIA'S Translation of PLUTARCH'S Letter of Consolation to his Wife, and inscribed by MONTAIGNE,*

To Mademoiselle DE MONTAIGNE, my Wife.

**Y**OU know, wife, very well, that according to the fashion of the fine gentlemen now a-days, you are not to expect to be still courted and carested. For they say, that a man of parts may indeed take a woman, but that he is a fool if he marry her. Let them say as they list; for my own part, I keep to the plain fashion of old age, of which I now and then wear the beard. And in truth novelty is so expensive even now to this poor state (and yet I know not whether it may not still rise higher) that in all cases and places I wash my hands of it. Let you and I, wife, live after the old French



French way. You may remember how that dear brother and inseparable companion of mine, M. de la Boetia, did on his death-bed give me his papers and books, which were afterwards my most favourite furniture. I neither desire nor deserve that they should be applied solely to my own use. For this reason I have resolved to give some of them to my friends. And, because I think I have none more intimate than yourself, I send you his French translation of Plutarch's Letter of Consolation to his Wife, being very sorry, that fortune has rendered this so suitable a present for you, and that though you have had no child but one daughter, after long expectation, when we had been married four years, you were forced to part with her in the second year of her age. But I leave it to Plutarch to console you, and to admonish you of your duty in this case, desiring that you would for my sake give him credit: for he will discover my intentions to you, and what may be urged upon this head, much better than I can. To conclude, wife, I earnestly commend myself to your favour, and pray God to preserve you. I am

Paris,  
Sept. 10, 1570.

Your good husband,

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE.

## LETTER IV.

*Printed before some Latin verses of STEPHEN DE LA BOETIA.*

*To Monseigneur, Monsieur de l'Hospital, chancellor of France.*

MONSEIGNEUR,  
**I** HAVE a notion that such gentlemen as you, to whom fortune and the reason of things have committed the administration of the public affairs, are not more curious in any enquiry, than how you may attain



to the knowledge of the men in your offices; for there is scarce any community so barren, but it has men enough in it for the commodious discharge of all its functions, provided its department and jurisdiction can be justly laid out. And when that point is once gained, there would be nothing remaining to hinder the perfect composition of a state. Now the more desirable this is, the more difficult it is, forasmuch as neither your eyes can see so far, as to try and chuse in so great and so diffuse a multitude, nor can they penetrate to the bottom of men's hearts, to discover their intentions and their consciences, the chief articles to be considered; so that there was never yet any establishment ever so good, in which we have not often observed the mistake of such allotment and election. And in those, where ignorance and malice, dissimulation, bribery, intrigues, and violence carry the point, if any election is made meritoriously, it is undoubtedly to be ascribed to fortune, which by the inconstancy of its various turns happened this one time to fall into the train of reason. This consideration, Sir, has often been my comfort, knowing M. Stephen de la Boetia, one of the most proper and necessary men for the chief offices in France, to have lived all his days unemployed and neglected by his own fire-side, to the great damage of the commonweal; for as to his own part I must tell you, sir, that he so abounded in those possessions and treasures which defy fortune, that never was any man more satisfied or more contented. I know indeed that he was advanced to those dignities of his neighbourhood, which are reckoned great; and I know moreover that never was any man better qualified for them, and that at thirty-two years of age, when he died, he had acquired greater reputation in that class than any of his predecessors. But surely it is unreasonable to let a man who would make a good officer, remain a common soldier, and to employ those in mean offices who would act well in the chief. The truth is, that his abilities were not employed to the best advantage, nor sufficiently exerted; so that over and above his office, he had a surplus of  
great



great talents that were idle and unprofitable, which might have been of service to the public affairs, and an honour to himself. But, sir, since he was so backward to push himself into the grande monde; it not being the lot of virtue and ambition to lodge in one breast; and as he lived in times so stupid or so full of envy, that he could not possibly have any assistance from another's testimony of him, I long prodigiously; that at least his memory, which alone must now and ever lay claim to the offices of our friendship, may receive the reward of his merit, and that it may have a place in the recommendation of persons of honour and virtue. For this reason, sir, I was desirous of bringing him to light, and presenting him to you by these few Latin verses that he has left behind him. Quite contrary to the mason who exhibits the gayest part of his edifice towards the street, and to the mercer who makes a shew and parade of the richest sample of his goods, the things most to be prized in my friend, the very juice and marrow of his merit, went away with him, and we have nothing left of him but the bark and the leaves. The man who is capable of displaying the well regulated sallies of his imagination, his piety, his virtue, his justice, the vivacity of his temper, the weight and solidity of his judgment, the sublimity of his conceptions, so far exalted above those of the vulgar, his learning, the gracefulness that usually accompanied all his actions, the tender love which he had for his wretched country, and his mortal and avowed aversion to every vice, but especially to that base traffick which is screened under the honourable name of justice, would certainly kindle a singular affection for him in the breast of all good men, mixed with a wonderful regret for the loss of him. But, sir, this is so far out of my power, that he never had a thought of leaving any evidence to posterity of the fruit of his studies, and nothing remains thereof but what he wrote now and then to pass away the time. Be this as it will, I intreat you, sir, to receive him with a good countenance; and as we often judge of the greater by the less, and as the very pastimes of great men give an



honourable idea to the clear sighted, of the source from which they spring, I hope you will by this work of his rise to the knowledge of himself, and by consequence love and embrace his name and memory. In so doing, sir, you will but render an equivalent to the very settled opinion which he had of your virtue, and also accomplish what he exceedingly longed for whilst he lived. For there was not a man in the world, in whose acquaintance and friendship he thought himself more happy than in yours. But if any one takes it ill that I make so bold with other people's concerns, I must tell him, that never was any thing more exactly written or delivered in the schools of the philosophers, concerning the prerogatives and duties of sacred friendship than what was the practice betwixt this personage and me. For the rest, sir, this trivial present, like killing two birds with one stone, will serve, if you please, to shew you the honour and veneration in which I hold your abilities, and singular inherent qualities; for as to such as are external and fortuitous, it is not my fancy to bring them into the accompt.

Sir, I pray God to grant you very happy long life.

Montaigne.  
April 30, 1570.

Your obedient humble servant,

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE.

## L E T T E R V.

*Or rather an extract of a letter, which Monsieur the counsellor DE MONTAIGNE, wrote to his father Monseigneur DE MONTAIGNE, containing some particulars which he observed, of the sickness and death of the late M<sup>r</sup>. DE LA BOETIA.*

**A**S to his last words, if a good account of them is to be expected from any hand, it is undoubtedly from mine; not only because all the time of his sickness, he was not so fond of conversing with any body as with me, but also because, such was the singular and brotherly love



love we bore to one another, that I had a most certain knowledge of his designs, opinions, and temper, all his life-time, as much no doubt as it was possible for any one man to know of another, and because I knew them to be sublime, virtuous, determinate, and withal wonderful : I foresaw, that if his distemper would give him strength to express himself, nothing would come from his lips but what was great, and very worthy of imitation ; therefore I gave the utmost attention to it. It is true, monseigneur, that as my memory is very short and moreover bewildered by the trouble of my mind for so heavy and important a loss, it is impossible but I may have forgot many things which I could wish were known ; but as for those which I recollect, I will send you them with the strictest regard to truth that is possible. For in order to represent him thus cruelly stopped in his worthy progress ; to shew you his invincible courage in a body broke down and demolished by the furious efforts of pain and death, would, I confess, require a much better style than mine, because, though when he talked of grave and important subjects he mentioned them in such a manner that it was difficult to write them down so well, yet it seemed at this time as if there was an emulation betwixt his thoughts and his words which should do him the last service. For sure I am that I never observed him to have so many and such fine imaginations, and those uttered with so much eloquence as his were all the time of his illness. Presuming, monseigneur, that you would not dislike it, I have chose to bring into my narrative his most trivial and common topics, which having been delivered by him at that time, and in the height of so great an affliction, are a singular evidence of a mind quite at ease, tranquil, and secure.

On Monday the 9th of August, 1563, after I was come home from the Palais, I sent to invite him to dine with me. He returned me for answer, with thanks, that he was a little out of order, and that I should do him a pleasure if I would but spend an hour with him before he set out for Medor. Soon after I had dined I waited



on him. He was lain down on the bed with his clothes on, and I found his countenance strangely altered. He told me that he had a looseness on him, attended with the gripes, ever since the day before when he played with M. d'Escars, and wore only a doublet under a silk garment; and that often when he caught a cold it was attended with such fits. I thought it proper that he should undertake the journey he had intended, but advised him to go no farther that evening than to Germignan, which is but two leagues out of town. I did this the rather, because the place where he lay was close to some houses that were infected with the plague, of which he was somewhat afraid, since he returned from Perigord and the Agenois, where it raged in all parts; besides I had formerly myself found benefit in such a distemper as his was, by riding on horseback. Accordingly he set out, accompanied by his wife and his uncle M. de Bouillonas.

Early the next morning behold one of his domestics came to me from Mademoiselle de la Boetia, to acquaint me that he had been seized that night with a violent dysentery; she sent for a doctor and an apothecary, and desired me to come to him, which after dinner I did.

He was overjoyed to see me, and when I was taking my leave of him in order to return home, with a promise to visit him again next day, he desired me, with more affection and importunity than ever he had begged any thing in his life, to be with him as much as possible; this touched me a little to the quick. Yet I was actually going away when Mademoiselle de la Boetia, who had already a foreboding of I know not what calamity, intreated me with tears in her eyes that I would not stir from him that night. Accordingly she prevailed on me to stay, at which he was very much cheered. Next day I returned home, and on Thursday I went to see him again. His distemper was worse, and his flux of blood, with the gripings, which weakened him very much, increased every hour.

On



On the Friday I saw him again, and on Saturday I found him very low-spirited; he then told me that his distemper was of the contagious kind, and moreover, that it was disagreeable and choleric; that he very well knew my temper, and desired me to visit him but now and then, yet as often as I could. After this I did not leave him. Till the following Sunday he had said nothing to me of what he thought of his being, and we discoursed only about the particular circumstances of his malady, and what the ancient physicians said of it. We had very little talk about public affairs, which I found, from the very first day, he had an aversion to. But on the Sunday he fainted away: and as he came to himself, he said that all things appeared to him in a confusion, and that he had seen nothing but a thick cloud and an obscure mist, in which every thing was confounded and disordered; but that nevertheless all this fit had given him no displeasure. Death, said I then to him, has nothing worse than this: nay, nothing, replied he, so bad.

Having had no manner of sleep since the first attack of his distemper, and growing still worse, notwithstanding all remedies, so that certain draughts were now taken by him which are never ordered but in cases of the last extremity, he began from this time to despair altogether of his recovery, and communicated his thoughts to me. That same day, because he was in good temper, I said to him, that considering the extraordinary affection which I bore to him, it would ill-become me if I did not take care, that as all his actions in health had been very prudent and well weighed, he should continue to act with the same prudence in his sickness; and that if it were God's will that he should be worse, I should be very sorry that for want of advice he should leave any of his domestic affairs unsettled, not only by reason of the damage which his relations might suffer by it, but for the sake of his reputation; which piece of advice he took very kindly at my hands; and after having solved some difficulties which kept him in suspense, he desired me to call his uncle and his wife singly to him, that he might



give them to understand, what he had resolved on as to his will. I told him that would cast them down. No, no, said he, I will comfort them, and give them much better hopes of my recovery than I entertain myself. And then he asked me whether the fainting-fits which he had, did not a little surprise us. That's of no moment, said I to him, these are fits which are common to such distempers. True brother, replied he, it is of no significance, though what you are most afraid of should be the consequence. To you alone, said I, it would be a happy turn, but the hurt would be to me, who should thereby lose the company of so great, so wise, and sure a friend, whose equal I am certain I should never find. It is very possible, he added, that you never may; and I assure you, that what makes me somewhat solicitous for my recovery, and not to hasten to that passage to which I am gone already half way, is the consideration of the loss you will sustain, as well as that poor man and poor woman there (alluding to his uncle and his wife) whom I love entirely, and who, I am sure, will have much difficulty to bear the loss of me; which indeed will be a very great one, both to them and you. I am also concerned for the regret it will be received with by many people, who have hitherto had a love and value for me, and whose conversation verily, if I could help it, I own I should be glad not to lose as yet. And if I go off the stage of this world, I intreat you, brother, as you know them, to give them a testimony of the friendship I retain for them, to the last breath of my life: and moreover, brother, I was not born perhaps to so little purpose, but I have had it in my power to serve the common cause. But be this as it will, I am ready to depart when it shall please God, being very sure that I shall enjoy the ease you have foretold to me. And, as to you, my friend, I know you to be so wise, how much soever it affects you, that you will nevertheless conform patiently and willingly to whatever it shall please his divine Majesty to order concerning me; and I beseech you to take care that the mourning for my departure may not drive  
that



that good man and good woman out of the pale of their reason. He then asked me how they behaved already : I told him very well, considering the importance of the case. I suppose so, said he, now that they have still some hopes ; but should I once deprive them of any hopes, you will be much perplexed to keep them in temper. In pursuance of this regard for them, he always concealed from them the certain persuasion he had of his death, as long as he lived, and earnestly begged me to behave in the same manner. When he saw them near him, he affected to look brisk and gay, and fed them with flattering hopes.

I now left him to go and call them. They composed their countenances the best they could for a while ; and after we were seated round his bed, we four being all alone, he spoke as follows with a settled countenance, as it were quite gay : “ My uncle and my wife, I assure  
 “ you upon my credit, that no fresh attack of my dis-  
 “ temper, or misapprehension that I have of my reco-  
 “ very, has put it into my head to call you, in order to  
 “ apprize you of my intention ; for, God be praised, I  
 “ am very well and full of hopes ; but having long been  
 “ convinced, both by experience and study, of the little  
 “ security that is to be placed in the instability and in-  
 “ constancy of human affairs, and even of the uncer-  
 “ tainty of that life whereof we are so fond, which is  
 “ nevertheless but smoke and a mere nothing ; and con-  
 “ sidering also, that because I am sick, I am so much the  
 “ nearer advanced to the danger of death, I am resolved  
 “ to put my domestic affairs in order before I die, after  
 “ having first taken your advice.” And then addressing  
 his discourse to his uncle : “ My good uncle, said he,  
 “ were I at this hour to give you an account of the great  
 “ obligations I have to you, I should not know where to  
 “ end. It is enough for me that hitherto, wheresoever I  
 “ have been, and with whomsoever I have talked, I  
 “ have always said that whatever a wise, good, and most  
 “ bountiful father could do for his son, all this have you  
 “ done for me ; both for the care that was necessary to  
 “ give



“ give me good learning, and when you were pleased to  
 “ push me into public employments ; so that the whole  
 “ course of my life has been full of great and praise-  
 “ worthy offices of your friendship towards me : in short,  
 “ whatever I have, I hold from you, and acknowledge  
 “ that I am obliged for to you, who have been to me a  
 “ father indeed ; so that as the son of the family, I have  
 “ no power to dispose of any thing, unless you are  
 “ pleased to give me leave.” He then was silent, and  
 staid till sighs and sobs gave his uncle leisure to answer  
 him, that whatever he thought fit would be always very  
 acceptable to him. Having purposed at the same time  
 to make him his heir, he desired him to accept of his  
 estate.

And then turning his discourse to his wife, “ My like-  
 “ ness, said he, (for so he often called her on account of  
 “ some ancient relation betwixt them) as I have been,  
 “ joined to you by the sacred tie of marriage, which is  
 “ one of the most respectable and inviolable obliga-  
 “ tions which God has laid upon us here below for keep-  
 “ ing up human society, I have loved, cherished, and  
 “ esteemed you as far as I was able ; and am fully as-  
 “ sured that you have returned me a reciprocal affection,  
 “ which I cannot sufficiently acknowledge. I desire you  
 “ to take that share of my goods which I give you, and  
 “ to content yourself therewith, though I know indeed  
 “ that it is very little, compared with your deserts.”

After this, addressing himself to me, “ My brother,  
 “ said he, whom I love so dearly, and whom I have cho-  
 “ sen out of such a multitude, in order to renew that vir-  
 “ tuous and sincere friendship with you, the exercise of  
 “ which has by the vices of the age been so long unknown  
 “ to us that there are only some old traces left of it in the  
 “ memory of antiquity, I beseech you, as a token of my  
 “ affection for you, to accept of the gift of my library  
 “ and books ; a present very small, but given with a good  
 “ heart, and which is the fitter for you considering you  
 “ are a lover of learning. This will serve you as a  
 “ *μνημόσυλον*, or a remembrancer of your companion.”

Then



Then addressing himself to all three of us in general, he blessed God that in a case of such extremity he was accompanied by all those that were the dearest to him in the world, and said, he thought it a very goodly sight to see four persons assembled together so well agreed, and united in friendship, not doubting, he said, that we all loved one another unanimously, each one for the sake of the others. And after having recommended us to one another, he proceeded thus : having now settled my temporal affairs, I must also think of my spirituals. “ I am a christian; I am a catholic; such I have lived and such I am determined to die. Send for a priest to come to me, for I am not willing to be deficient in this last duty of a christian.”

With this particular he ended his discourse, which he had carried on with such a steady countenance, such a strength of language and voice, that whereas when I entered his chamber, I found him weak, mighty slow in the utterance of his words, his pulse very low, as if he had a lingering fever, and tending to death, his countenance quite pale and wan ; he seemed now, as if it had been by a miracle, to have resumed fresh vigour, with a more ruddy complexion and a stronger pulse, so that I made him feel mine in order to comparé them together. At that instant my heart was so sunk that I could scarce answer him a word. But two or three hours after, in order to keep up his noble courage, and also because I wished, from the tender concern I had all my life long for his honour and glory, that there were more witnesses of so many strong proofs of his magnanimity, by having a larger company in his chamber, I said to him, that I blushed for shame to think that my courage failed me in the hearing of what he, who was so great a sufferer, had the courage to tell me; that hitherto I had thought, that God scarce ever gave us so great an advantage over human incidents, and could hardly believe what I had read of it in some histories; but that having now seen such a proof of it, I praised God that I had found it in a person, by whom I was so much beloved, and who was



to me so dear, and that this would serve me as an example to act the same part in my turn.

He interrupted me by desiring I would behave so, and demonstrate by the effect, that the conversation we had had in the time of our health, was not only oral but deeply engraved on our hearts, and ready to be put in execution upon the first occasion that offered; adding, that this was the true practice of our studies, and of philosophy. Then taking me by the hand, "My brother, my friend, said he, I assure thee I have done many things, I think, in my life, with as much pain and difficulty as I do this. And when all is said and done, it is a long while ago since I was prepared for it, and that I had got all my lesson by heart. But is it not enough to have lived to my age? I was just entering into my thirty-third year. By God's grace all my days hitherto have been healthy and happy; but through the inconstancy of human affairs they could not continue so longer. It was now time to launch into serious affairs, and to expect to meet with a thousand unpleasant scenes, as particularly the inconveniencies of old age, of which I am by this means quit: and besides, it is probable that I have lived to this hour with more innocence and less ill-nature than I should have done, if God had permitted me to live till my head had been filled with the care of getting wealth and ease. As for my part, I am certain that I am going to God, and the seat of the blessed." But now, because my countenance betrayed some uneasiness at these words of his, "What, brother, said he, would you possess me with fear? if I had any terror upon me, whose business should it be to take it off, but yours?"

The notary, who was sent for to receive his last will and testament, coming in the evening, I made him commit it to writing, and then went to ask him whether he was not willing to sign it: "Not sign it? said he, I will sign it with my own hand. But I wish brother that they had given me more time, for I find myself extremely weary, and so weak that I am in a manner spent." I was  
going



going to change the discourse, but he recovered himself on a sudden, and said to me, that he had not very long to live, and he desired of me to know whether the notary wrote a swift hand, for he should scarce make any pause in dictating. I called the notary to him, and he dictated his will to him on the spot, so fast that he had much ado to keep pace with him. When he had made an end, he desired me to read it to him, and said to me: "See, what it is to take care of that fine thing our riches." *Sunt hæc quæ hominibus vocantur bona*; "these are the things that men call good." After the will was signed, his chamber being full of people, he asked me if talking would do him any harm; I said no, provided he spoke softly.

Then he called Mademoiselle de Saintquentin, his niece, to him, and spoke to her thus. "My dear niece, I think that ever since I have known you, I have seen the rays of a very good nature sparkle in your countenance; but these last offices which you perform with so much affection and diligence in my present necessity, give me very great hopes of you, and really I am obliged to you, and thank you, most affectionately. Now, in order to discharge my conscience, I advise you in the first place to devote yourself to God, for this is no doubt, the principal part of your duty, and that without which no other action of ours can be either good or goodly; and when such devotion is hearty, it necessarily draws after it all other virtuous actions. Next to God, you must love and honour your father and your mother, even your mother my sister, whom I take to be one of the best and most prudent women in the world; and desire you to regulate your life by her example. Do not suffer yourself to be drawn aside by pleasures. Avoid as a pestilence those silly familiarities with which you see the women sometimes indulge the men; for though there may be no harm in them at first, yet by little and little they corrupt the mind, and lead it to a thoughtless state, and from thence to the abominable  
" sink



“ sink of vice. Believe me, the surest protection of  
 “ young woman’s chastity is gravity. I desire you,  
 “ (and expect that you will remember me by frequently  
 “ recollecting the friendships I have shewed you) not to  
 “ complain and grieve yourself for the loss of me; and,  
 “ as far as is in my power, I lay all my friends under the  
 “ same prohibition, since it would look as if they en-  
 “ vied the happiness of which, by the favour of  
 “ death, I shall soon see myself in possession; and as-  
 “ sure yourself, my girl, that if God was now to indulge  
 “ me with the choice, whether of living my life over  
 “ again, or of finishing the journey which I have begun,  
 “ I should be actually at a loss which to choose. My  
 “ dear niece, adieu.”

He then called to Mademoiselle d’Arsat, his daughter-  
 in-law, and said to her, “ My daughter, you have no  
 “ great need of admonitions from me, as you have a  
 “ mother whom I have found so prudent, so very con-  
 “ formable to my temper and inclinations, that she never  
 “ once offended me. You will be very well instructed  
 “ by such a tutress; and do not think it strange if I,  
 “ who am not related to you by blood, have a care and  
 “ anxiety for you. For since you are the daughter of a  
 “ person so near to me in alliance, it is impossible but I  
 “ must also be touched with whatever concerns you.  
 “ At the same time I have ever taken as much care of  
 “ the affairs of M. d’Arsat your brother, as if they were  
 “ my own. You have enough both of wealth and beauty.  
 “ You are a gentlewoman of a good family. You have  
 “ nothing more to do than to grace them both with the  
 “ talents of the mind, which I desire you would not fail  
 “ of doing. I do not forbid you that vice which is so  
 “ detestable in women; for I am not willing so much as  
 “ to think you can entertain a favourable thought of it,  
 “ nay, I am of opinion that you abhor the very name of  
 “ it. My daughter in-law, farewell.”

Though the whole chamber was full of weeping and  
 wailing, it did not interrupt the thread of his discourses,  
 which were pretty long. But after he had made an end,  
 he



He ordered every one to quit his room except his garrison, which was the name he gave to his maid-servants. And then calling to my brother de Beauregard, he said to him: “ M. de Beauregard, I thank you very heartily for the pains which you take for me. I have something very much at heart, which I long to tell you, and will therefore with your leave discover it to you.” And being encouraged by my brother, he proceeded thus : “ I swear to you that of all who have set about the reformation of the church, I never thought there was any one man that entered upon it with better zeal and a more entire, sincere, and undisguised affection than you. And I verily believe, you was excited to it merely by the vices of our prelates, who undoubtedly stand in need of great amendment, and by certain imperfections, that have in a course of time crept into our church. I do not wish at this juncture to dissuade you from it, as I do not willingly desire any body to do any thing whatsoever against his conscience. But I would fain caution you, that in regard to the good reputation which your family has acquired by their perpetual agreement, a family than which not one in the world is dearer to me, (good God, where is such another family as this, which never did an action unbecoming an honest man!) in regard to the will of your father, that good father to whom you are so much obliged, and of your uncle, and for the sake of your brethren, you would avoid coming to extremities; be not so sharp and so violent; accommodate yourself to them. Make no separate combination nor party; but unite yourselves together. You see what ruin these dissensions have brought upon this kingdom, and I can assure you that they will be attended with still greater mischiefs: and as you are not deficient either in wisdom or goodness, be cautious of bringing your family into these inconveniencies, for fear they should deprive it of the honour and happiness which it has enjoyed to this hour. Take what I say to you, sir, in good part, and for a sure testimony of the friendship which I bear

“ to



“ to you. For with this view I hitherto reserved my  
 “ mention of it to you ; and perhaps the condition in  
 “ which you now see me speaking it will give my words  
 “ more weight and authority with you.” My brother  
 thanked him very much.

On the Monday morning he was so bad that he quitted  
 all hopes of life ; infomuch that the very next time he  
 saw me, he in a very deplorable tone said : “ Brother,  
 “ have you no pity for the many torments that I suffer ?  
 “ Don’t you now see, that all the relief you give me  
 “ serves only to prolong my pain ?” Soon after this he  
 fainted ; so that we began to give him over for dead : at  
 length by the power of vinegar and wine he was revived.  
 But he did not live long after, and hearing us lament a-  
 bout him, he said : “ My God, who is it torments me so ?  
 “ Why was I robbed of that profound and pleasant rest  
 “ which I had ? pray leave me to myself.” And then hearing  
 me, he said, “ And you too, brother, are not willing nei-  
 “ ther that I should be cured. Oh, what ease do you de-  
 “ prive me of !” At last being a little more come to him-  
 self, he desired a little wine, and liking it well, said to  
 me, it was the best liquor in the world.” “ No surely, said I,  
 “ for argument sake, water is the best. Yes, without doubt,  
 “ replied he, water is an excellent thing, *ἰδὼς ἀριστον.*” His  
 extreme parts even to his face were now become as cold  
 as clay, attended with a death-sweat, which ran down  
 all his body, and he had scarce any sign of a pulse left.  
 This morning he confessed to his priest, who did not  
 bring all the necessaries with him, and therefore could  
 not celebrate the mass. But on Tuesday morning M. de  
 la Boetia sent for him to assist him as he said, in the per-  
 formance of the last duty of a christian. Consequently  
 he heard mass and received the sacrament. And when the  
 priest was taking leave of him, he said : “ My spiritual  
 “ father, I humbly beseech it of you, and those who are  
 “ under your charge, to pray to God for me, that if it  
 “ be ordered in the most sacred rolls of the decrees of  
 “ God that I should now end my days, that he would  
 “ take pity on my soul, and forgive me my sins, which  
 “ are



are without number, as it is not possible for so vile and base a creature as I am, to perform the commands of so high and mighty a Master; or if it seemeth good to him, that I should tarry longer in this world, beg of him to put a speedy period to the agonies which I suffer; and that he would be so gracious to me, as to guide my steps hereafter in the path of his holy will, and to make me better than I have been." At this period he stopped a little to take breath, and seeing that the priest was going away, he recalled him, and said to him: "I am willing to declare this also in your presence: I protest, that as I have been baptised and have lived, so I am willing to die, in the faith and religion which Moses first planted in Egypt, which the patriarchs received afterwards in Judæa, and which in the progress of time has been handed down to us in France." It seemed as if he would fain have spoke a little more if he had been able to have held out; but he concluded with desiring his uncle and me to pray to God for him; this being, he said, the best office that Christians can perform for one another. In speaking he happened to uncover his shoulder, and desired his uncle to cover it again, though he had a valet nearer to him: and then looking upon me, he said, *Ingenui est, cui multum debeas, ei plurimum velle debere*; "it is the quality of an ingenuous mind to desire to be under still greater obligation to the person whom we are much obliged to already." In the afternoon M. de Belot came to visit him, and taking him by the hand, said to him, "My friend, I came hither, sir, on purpose to pay my debt, but I have found a worthy creditor, who has forgiven it me." A little after, starting suddenly out of a doze, he said, "Well, well, come when it will, I wait for it with serenity and pleasure." Words which he repeated two or three times in his illness. Afterwards as they were forcing open his mouth to take a draught, he said, turning himself to M. de Belot, *An vivere tantiest?* "Is life worth all this ado?" In the evening death begun indeed at night to strike him with its arrows, and as I was at supper, he sent for me, being nothing now but skin and bones, or as he called himself,



*Non homo sed species hominis*; “not a man but of the  
“human race.” And he said to me with the utmost  
struggles: “My brother and friend, God grant that I  
“may see the imaginations that I have just been enter-  
“tained with, realised.” After he had stopt a while,  
and laboured hard with the deepest sighs for utterance,  
for then the tongue was beginning plainly to deny him  
its last office. I said, “What were those ideas, bro-  
“ther?” “Great,” said he, “very great.” “It never  
“happened before, I added, that I had not the honour  
“of being made acquainted with all your ideas; will  
“you not let me still enjoy that confidence?” “Yes,  
“surely, brother,” said he, “but it is not in my power  
“to discover them; they are wonderful, infinite, and  
“unspeakable.” There he stopped, for he could pro-  
ceed no farther; infomuch, that a little before he would  
fain have talked to his wife, when he said to her, with  
the most chearful countenance he could put on, that he  
had something to tell her; and he seemed to strive to  
speak, but his spirits failing, he called for a little wine  
to raise them, but it signified nothing; for he fainted  
away on a sudden, and for a good while lost his sight.  
Being now just on the confines of death, and hearing  
the lamentations of his wife, he called her, and spoke  
thus to her: “My image, you torment yourself before  
“the time; won’t you pity me? Take courage. Ve-  
“rily I am more in pain for what I see you suffer than  
“what I feel myself, and with reason, because as for  
“the evils which we feel of our own, it is not, properly  
“speaking, we who feel them, but certain senses which  
“God has planted in us; and, what we feel for others,  
“we feel by a certain judgment and faculty of reason-  
“ing. But I see I am going.” This he said because  
his spirits failed him. Now being afraid that he had  
frighted his wife, he recovered himself and said: “I  
“find myself inclined to sleep: good night, wife, go  
“your ways.” This was the last leave he took of her.  
After she was gone, “Brother,” said he to me, “keep  
“close by me, if you please;” and then either feeling  
the darts of death come thicker and sharper, or else the  
force of some hot medicine which they had made him  
swal-



swallow, he spoke with a stronger and more audible voice, and turned himself in bed with perfect violence, so that all the company began to have some hopes, because hitherto he had been so very weak that we despaired of him. Then amongst other things he begged me again and again, with the greatest affection, to make room for him, so that I was afraid he was delirious. Moreover, when I had gently remonstrated to him that he was overpowered by his distemper, and that these were not the words of a man in his right senses; he did not seem to be convinced, but repeated it still more strongly. “Brother, brother, what, won’t you give me room?” in so much that he forced me to convince him by reason, and to say to him, that since he breathed and talked he had by consequence his place. “Yes, yes,” said he, “but that is not what I want; and besides, say what you will, I have no longer a being.” “God will give you a better very soon,” said I. “Would to God, brother,” said he, “I was there now; I have longed to be gone these three days past.” In this distressed state he often called to me, in order, for most part, to know whether I was near him. At length he inclined a little to rest, which confirmed us still more in our good hopes; so that I went out of his chamber to congratulate thereupon with Mademoiselle de la Boetia; but about an hour after naming me once or twice, and then fetching a deep sigh, he gave up the ghost about three o’clock on Wednesday morning, the 18th of August 1563, aged 32 years 9 months and 17 days.

## LETTER VI.†

*To Monseigneur Monseigneur DE MONTAIGNE.*

MONSEIGNEUR,

**I**N obedience to your commands last year at your house at Montaigne, I have with my own hands put

† I met with this Letter by way of Dedication of Raymond Sebonde’s *Natural Theology*, translated into French by Michael Seigneur de Montaigne, knight of the king’s order, and gentleman in ordinary of his privy-chamber. Printed at Roan by John de la Mere, an. 1641.



that great Spanish divine and philosopher Raymond de Sebonde into a French dress, and have as much as lay in my power stripped him of that rough mien and unpolite aspect, which he first appeared in to you; so that in my opinion he is comely and complaisant enough to appear in the best of company. It is possible that some delicate curious readers may perceive, that he has a little of the Gascogne turn and bias; but they may be the more ashamed of their own negligence, in suffering a person quite a novice and a learner to get the start of them in this work. Now, Monseigneur, it is but reason that it should be published to the world, and have the credit of your name, because what amendment and reformation it has is all owing to you. Yet I plainly perceive, that if you should please to settle accompts with him, you will be very much his debtor, since in exchange for his excellent and most religious discourses, of his sublime, and as it were divine conceptions, it will appear that you have only brought him words and language, a merchandize so mean and vulgar, that he who has the greatest stock of it is peradventure the worse for it.

Monseigneur, I beg God to grant you a long and happy life.

Your most humble and most obedient son,

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE.

*N. B. Mr. Coste has inserted a letter before this, which is addressed to Mademoiselle de Paumier, but it is only a short one, of mere compliment.*



A COMPLETE  
INDEX  
OF THE MOST  
REMARKABLE MATTERS  
CONTAINED IN THE THIRD BOOK.

A.

<b>A</b> bsence of friends, of what utility	Page 253
Abstinence of doing, generous	317
Abuses of the world, how begot	324
Accidents without remedy	214
Accommodations of the quarrels of these days, shameful and false	311
Acknowledgments of benefits	249
Action, forced, has neither grace nor honour	238
Actions the most common, the most troublesome	117
public, subject to various interpretations	313
necessary, pleasant	431, &c.
of all sorts, equally honourable to a wise man	433
Accusations answered with an ironical and scoffing confession	343
Admiration, the foundation of philosophy	323
Advice, free, necessary to kings	389
Æsop, his ass	9
his dog	374
Affairs, domestic, despised	220
how they ought to be conducted	310
Affection well tempered	6
Affections of beasts, what	48
of women subject to change	129
in farewells	76
towards children weakened by their imperfections	239
occasioned by small things	62
Air, evening, sharp and dangerous	297
Agésilas, his opinion of love	137
in his travels lodged in temples, why	26
Alcibiades, why he cut off the tail and ears of his dog	61
his ambition	315
	Alci-



# I N D E X.

Alcibiades banished music from tables	Page 428
Alexander's virtue	27
followers carried their heads on one side	176
Alexander and Thalestris	128
emulous of his father's victories	315
his fancies about immortalization	443
enjoyed corporal pleasures	431
his labour and end of it	439
Alteration, whatever hurts and astonishes	399
Ambition, a vice of great men	315
Americans virtue betrayed them to the Spaniards	163, 164
answer to the offers of the Spaniards	165
thought to be richer than they were	168
American kings magnificent garden	162
Americans massacred by the Spaniards	167, 168
Amphitheatres rich and sumptuous	156
Andrese hanged by his wife, Joan queen of Naples, for not being sufficiently furnished	130
Andron the Argian travelled over the sands of Lybia without drinking	394
Animosity betwixt Cæsar and Pompey	304
Antigonus's punishment of the treachery of his enemy's soldiers	12
excuse from giving any thing to a Cynic	331
Antiochus corrected his own writings	235
Antisthenes, why he advised the Athenians to employ asses in agriculture as well as horses	197
his opinion of Socrates	385
Apes very large taken by Alexander in the Indies	115
Appearances, superficial, carry a great weight in all things	190
outward, testimonies of internal constitution	27
Appetites rare in old age	34
of the body ought not to be augmented by the mind	138
Apple of discord	309
Apples of Hypomeneas	55
Arcefilaus's answer to a question, if it was possible for a wise man, or a philosopher, to be in love	142
Archytas's aversion to perfect solitude	267
Arcopagites ordering the parties to appear again after an hundred years	325
Argyraspides, soldiers, punished for having betrayed their general	12
Aristarchus's opinion of the conceitedness of the world in his time	384
Aristippus, his saying to some youths who blushed at his going to a bawdy-house	128
living as a stranger in all places	267
Aristodemus, king, what determined him to kill himself	66
Aristotle's opinion of beauty	362
reproached for being too merciful	369
Arrogancy a wrangling enemy to discipline	384
Astrology, when it had not determined the motion of the moon	319
Aralanta diverted from her way, lost the race	55
Atlantes	



# I N D E X.

<b>Atlantes</b> , a people who never dream	Page 418
<b>Attalus's</b> precept against soft beds	395
<b>Athens</b> compared to ladies of pleasure	85
<b>Avarice</b> has no greater impediment than itself	296
<b>Augustin, St.</b> his account of the transformation of a man into a horse after his eating chæse	328
<b>Austerity</b> of James king of Naples and Sicily	50
of life affected by some churchmen	52
of mens decrees renders the propension of women more violent	94
<b>Authority</b> of the counsels of kings ought to be preserved, and how	195

## B.

<b>B</b> Albus's tranquil life	172
<b>B</b> Bashfulness an ornament to young people	77
<b>Beasts</b> , naturally solicitous of their preservation	358
<b>Beauty</b> , what is, and how much it ought to be esteemed	362
<b>Beauties</b> of the person when preferred to those of the mind	49
painted, reckoned among deformities	142
of several sorts	363
<b>Beautiful</b> persons are fit to command	362
<b>Beds</b> soft despised	395
<b>Benefit</b> , reproach of one that is conferred, odious	242
<b>Beautiful</b> , called good	362
<b>Believers</b> , whether the number of them is a proof that they have truth on their side	321, 322
<b>Bion's</b> frank description of his original	258
<b>Births</b> and burials interdicted in the precincts of the Isle of Delos,	119
<b>Bisextile</b> day	318
<b>Bloody-flux</b> , flighted only as a looseness	338
<b>Body's</b> health and vigour the cause of the sprightliness of the mind	71
relation to and connexion with the soul	360, 361
<b>Boldness</b> and courage of the Indians	162
<b>Books</b> without learning, walls without stone or brick	21
their pleasure and inconvenience	52
written upon love	90
useful, and good, and yet no credit to their authors	202
<b>Bounty</b> and benefits preferred before valour	243
rare, the more beautiful and attractive	246
<b>Brachman</b> virgins	47
<b>Bread</b> without salt	419
<b>Broth</b> of eringos, or burst-wort, taken to oblige the ladies	406
<b>Business</b> , mark of understanding in some men	290
<b>Business</b> of most part of men is a farce	300

## C.

<b>C</b> Æsar's war with Pompey	304
did enjoy corporal pleasures	431
<b>Calicut</b> nobility	81



# I N D E X.

Cambyſes's dream that made him put his brother to death	Page 66
Canacre's ſervants hanged for betraying him	13
Capacity unfit for the management of public affairs	274
greater in adverſe than in proſperous fortune	210, 297
Capets, the meaning of that term	278
Carriage, ridiculous, of a gentleman in his own houſe	221
Carthaginians, in what caſe they puniſhed their victorious generals	194
Cato's vigorous virtue	274
Cauſey magnificent betwixt Quito and Cuſco.	170
Ceremonies troublesome	45
Chaces within the theatre at Rome	156
Chance has a very great ſhare in human actions	195
Change pleaſing to men	211
gives form to injuſtice and tyranny	226
Chariots drawn by four oxen	150
Chaiſement of offences ought to be performed without anger	296
Chafſity vowed and kept on the wedding-day	88
how hard it is for women to preſerve theirs	95
its duty or obligation hard to praſtiſe	101, 102, &c.
corrupted by thoſe who are leaſt to be feared	103, 104
extreme of ſome women	104
doth principally lie in the will	ibid.
of women, too nice an inſpection into it pernicious	106
Chelonis, the daughter of one king, and wife of another, her generous temper	421
Chewing accounted unbecoming	120
Children, how ought to be provided for by their fathers	214
attach men to futurity	285
not much to be coveted, why	ibid.
China, printing there	161
Chinese officers for diſtributing rewards and puniſhments	379
Cicero's opinion of a ſolitary life	267
Chirurgeon, his end, or view	226
Chirurgeons of Greece, performed on ſcaffolds	34
Choaspeſ, river, the water of it the conſtant beverage of the Perſian kings	247
Cholic as long-lived as men	408
Chryſippus drunk in his legs	428
Cinna, a remarkable action in the civil war againſt him	19
Claudius, emperor, a cuckold	110
Cleanthes, how much he got by the labour of his own hands	298
Coaches, of what uſe in battles	149
made uſe of by the Hungarians againſt the Turks	ibid.
of the emperors drawn by ſeveral animals	150
Codpieces worn heretofore	92
Coin, the uſe of it unknown in the Indies	168
Comedians touched to the quick in the acting of their parts	64
Command, difficult and troublesome employment	173
Commanding mixt with vexatious thoughts	211
Commentators, why ſo numerous	375
	Com-



# I N D E X.

<b>Commerce, or acquaintance with books</b>	Page 49
<b>Common-place books of what use</b>	359, 360
<b>Company accidental upon the road generally troublesome</b>	266
<b>Complacency and satisfaction in doing good</b>	23
<b>Complaints ease grief</b>	63
<b>Condemnations to what end</b>	178
<b>Conduct of the females to be left in a great measure to their own discretion</b>	127
of ourselves, the principal charge of every one	294
<b>Confession should be free and bold</b>	73
auricular	75
free and generous enervates reproach	258
<b>Confusion of other states pleasing to the eyes</b>	346
<b>Conjunction of the sexes a center to which all things tend</b>	90
of stars	170
<b>Conscience the advantages of a good one</b>	23
ties up the tongue, and stops the mouth	232
quiet, the gift of God	307
<b>Consolations, how they ought to be administered</b>	53
prescribed by philosophy	54
<b>Continence enjoined to women for their particular share</b>	86, 87
difficult, or rather impossible to women	ibid.
<b>Contradiction of judgment acceptable in conversation</b>	180
<b>Conversation of greater advantage than reading</b>	179
with men of genius why coveted	187
the better for smart repartees	201
with all men, its utility	37 to 41
with beautiful and well-bred women	46
<b>Corinth, its burghership offered to Alexander</b>	292
<b>Corps of beautiful women kept three days in Egypt before they were interred</b>	125
<b>Corruption is formed by the particular contribution of every man</b>	209
<b>Cotys, king of Thrace, why he broke a costly vessel</b>	305
<b>Covetousness ungrateful</b>	155
<b>Counsel's strength consists in time</b>	32
<b>Counsels ought not to be judged of by events</b>	33
<b>Country abandoned for the enjoyment of another air</b>	255
<b>Courage, what it is mistaken for</b>	6
<b>Courtiers mix with none but men of their own sort</b>	266
<b>Cranaus's method of mixing wine with water</b>	426
<b>Crates, his affectation of poverty</b>	220
in love with a she-goat	98
<b>Criminals condemned to execute themselves</b>	14
most cruel treatment	63
left to chuse in what manner they would be put to death	264
<b>Cripples, an old proverb about them</b>	329, 330
<b>Ctesiphon's folly in attempting to kick with his mule</b>	405
<b>Cuckolds pitied, not disesteemed for it</b>	107
<b>Cuckoldry among the ancients</b>	98
a character indelible	106
<b>Cuckoldry,</b>	



# I. N D. E X.

Cuckoldry, frequent, but not to be divulged of the emperor Claudius	Page 109 110
Curiosity pernicious to women increased by philosophical inquiries	108 381
Curtains of the amphitheatre of purple and needle-work	158
Custom of different countries contrary benumbs our senses to the sufferance of evils a second nature powerful over men's life	391 244 298 392
Cyrus, his bounty reproached but proposed as a lesson to other kings his precaution against the charms of his fair prisoner	155 306

## D.

<b>D</b> Amasus gardens untouched by the soldiers	341
Dancing practised by Epaminondas	433
Dandamys, an Indian sage, his censure of the lives of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes	9
Dangers, common, fright none but mean hearts	415
Daughters, the fault of their education naturally inclined to the passion of love	88 ibid.
Death generally and particularly considered preferred to banishment quiet and solitary preferred of several forms and qualities whether it ought to be prepared for contagious not the worst sort ought not to be premeditated the most happy, which a thing to be desired, and not to be dreaded is more glorious in a battle than in a bed	57, 58, 59 247 256 263, 264 352, 353 348 354, 355 354 357, 358 415
Decrepitude of the world a solitary quality	161 260
Deformity clothing a very beautiful soul	361
Democrates not for stopping at the fourth glass	426
Desire impetuous throws the mind into disorder	297
Desires ought to be circumscribed	300
Devotion easy to counterfeit without conscience do not satisfy the gods	31 364
Didymus, author of several thousand tracts on grammar	208
Dignities often distributed by fortune conferred upon ancient men	193 300
Dinner despised among the ancients is more wholesome than supper	426 ibid.
Diogenes patient of cold what sort of wine he liked best	304 216
Diomedes mistaken for Didymus	208
Dionysius his flatterers	176
Discourses of great men clouded with gravity dogmatical prove their weakness	197 326
Diseases guessing of them by urine very uncertain	413



# I N D E X.

Diseases have their courses and limits	Page 403.
all mortal and dangerous	408
medicinal and wholesome	ibid.
more grievous in their issue than in their operation	410
Disputation what makes it valuable	186
Disputes the bad consequence of those that are ill conducted	148
endless for most part about words	376
should be punished as verbal crimes	184
Diversion a good receipt for the diseases of the mind	56
from revenge	59
from love	60
from common rumours	61
made use of to comfort	53
Diversions military	54
Divination of things to come from dreams	418
Divisions in France	277
Domestic affairs very troublesome	215
Double-dealing men, what good for	7
Doubt better than assurance in things hard to be proved	347
Dreams full of agitations	418
true interpreters of inclinations	417
Drinking, a gentleman a whole year without it	394
how far allowed	426
Drugs and poisons the worst sort of homicides	326
Drusus's answer to an architect who offered to contrive his house so that it should not be overlooked	26

## E.

<b>E</b> ating, a sight hateful to some nations	120
schools at Rome	428
Eggs distinguished one from another	370
Egypt, the oath of its judges	11
Elephant, the price of a woman's prostitution	105
Employment does not corrupt an honest man	300
the most painful	173
the most pleasant to every one	222
Enjoyments are not alike	125
Enjoyment is not a sufficient testimony of a woman's affection	ibid.
Epaminondas placed in the first rank of excellent men	17
his delicacy in the article of justice	ibid.
his humanity	18
his great virtues	ibid.
his custom of sacrificing to the Muses when he went to war	ibid.
his magnanimity	19
cheerful death	59
Epicurus, how little he lived upon	298
why he fasted	424
Epitomizing of books, a foolish undertaking without honour to the undertaker	203



# I N D E X.

	Page
<b>Erasmus</b> full of adages and apophthegms	28
<b>Eringo</b> broth taken by Montaigne to oblige the ladies	406
<b>Essenians</b> how they lived without the use of women	119
<b>Esteem</b> vulgar and common, seldom hits right	235
<b>Estimation</b> not due to little performances	316
<b>Events</b> succeeding contrary to opinions	32
poor testimony of men's worth and parts	196
often effects of good fortune	ibid.
<b>Evil</b> , the oldest, the most supportable	227
<b>Evils</b> , how they ought to be endured	402
have their periods as well as goods	403
<b>Examples</b> strange and scholastic	394
<b>Excuses</b> and satisfactions scandalous	311
<b>Expence</b> excessive of monarchs, a testimony of pusillanimity	150
<b>Expences</b> of kings, how they might be profitably laid out	151
how they ought to be managed	221, 222
of the Roman emperors at the public spectacles ill-judged	156
<b>Experience</b> of every man sufficient to make him wise	382
rules reason in the art of physic	390
<b>Eyes</b> of dying persons closed by their nearest relations	254
beautiful, menacing a dangerous and malignant nature	363

## F.

<b>F</b> aces, some happy, some unhappy	363
of men like or unlike	377
<b>Facility</b> of people in suffering themselves to be imposed upon, by the leaders of a party	303
<b>Fallings</b> , the reasons all men have to bear with one another	180, 187, 188, &c.
<b>Painting</b> not dreadful	417
<b>Falling-sickness</b> corrected by Cæsar	398
<b>Fame</b> bought at a great rate	316
<b>Family's</b> excellent estate	25
<b>Fancy</b> , frivolous and extravagant, suitable to human wit	180
<b>Fashions</b> of foreigners abominated	265
<b>Fasting</b> of Epicurus, to what end	424
<b>Fatua</b> , Faunus's wife, would see no man after marriage	104
<b>Favorinus</b> , why he suffered himself to be foiled in a grammatical dispute by the emperor Adrian	177
<b>Favour</b> of princes by whom despised	307
<b>Fear</b> upon the waters, from whence it proceeds	149
<b>Felicity</b> human, according to Montaigne's opinion	35
<b>Fidelity</b> in love	135
<b>Fire</b> made on the outside, and at the foot of the houses among the Romans	394
<b>Fish</b> easy of digestion	424
<b>Flatterers</b> corrupt kings	388
<b>Flavius's</b> constancy at his execution	57
<b>Flight</b> without affright and astonishment	147
<b>Flight</b>	



# I N D E X.

Flight necessary, from the evil that men cannot endure	Page 306
Flora, (the famous courtesan's) amours	48
Folly not to be cured by admonition	200
Fool, in what most disgusting	ibid.
Foolish discourse, what gives weight to it	190
Forefight of good and ill	148
Fortitude, its office	436
Fortune favours the executions of the most simple men	194
French armies abound with foreigners	339
gentlemen have small legs	330
scribblers, and language	112, 113
soldiers when without order and discipline	341
Friendship, one single and perfect preferred before all others	41
private, contemned for the common good	19
scarce betwixt husbands and wives	84, 85
that flatters itself	181
civilized and artificial	ibid.
purely of our own acquiring ought to be preferred before all others	247
conjugal, grows warm by absence	250
its true aim	233
true and false	293
sound and regular	294
singular	387
Friend, how useful and necessary	259
Friends taking leave one of another unpleasant	255
more faithful than mercenary men	155
Frugality of the kings of France	151
Fruition and possession principally appertain to the imagination	251

## G.

G Alba, a saying of that emperor, misplaced to another's account	209
Galba, another man, who dissembled sleeping to favour Mecenas's	
amour with his wife	105
his amours	142
Games of chance, why left off by our author	305
Gaming, the conduct required in it	297
Garden, magnificent, of the king of Mexico	162
Generation act, why excluded from serious discourse	76
Genital member unruly, and abused	93
Giants in the West-Indies	169
Gifts of kings, how they ought to be bestowed	155
Glory, the shortest way to it	27
Glosses upon books only augment doubts	373
Gods obnoxious to passions	175
Gold hoarded together for ornament and shew	109
Good, sovereign, of the Academics and Peripatetics	440
Good	



# I N D E X.

<b>Good</b> and evil is never sent absolutely pure to men	Page 347
<b>Goods</b> of the mind seem fruitless to men, if not produced to the view of others	222
<b>Goodness</b> in necessity	275
<b>Government</b> of a family more troublesome than hard	213
what is the best for every nation	224
civil a mighty thing, and hard to be dissolved	228
whether violence may be committed in a country for the sake of rectifying it	311
<b>Grammar</b> six thousand books written upon it by one author	208
<b>Gratitude</b> towards the dead	282
<b>Greatness</b> easily avoided, and despised	171, 172
its inconveniency, and advantage	171
<b>Great men</b> have no true share in the exercises of honour and valour	174
not so silly sometimes as they seem to be	191
gainers by their silence	193
<b>Greedy eating</b> reproved by Diogenes	428
<b>Grief</b> eased by a pleasant method	64
imprinted by counterfeited forms	ibid.
<b>Gryllus</b> , his valiant death	59
<b>Guests</b> , how ought to be chosen according to Varro	420, 424, 428
<b>Gymnastic</b> of Plato	93

## H.

<b>H</b> Arangue cannot make men valiant on a sudden	200
<b>H</b> Health, what is	391, &c.
more pleasant after sickness	40
<b>Heat</b> coming from the fire makes the head heavy	392
<b>Hegeſias's</b> diſciples pined themſelves to death, why	56
<b>Heracitus</b> , what Socrates thought of his writings	374
<b>Hiero's</b> wife, thought all mens breath ſtunk	104
<b>Himbercourt</b> , how he appeaſed the fury of the Liegeois	54
<b>Hippias Eleus</b> , why he learned to do every thing for himſelf	241
<b>History</b> profitable to be read at all times	191
<b>Honesty</b> ſcholastic	364
<b>Horace's</b> language	112
<b>Houſewifery</b> , the beſt knowledge for a mother of a family	250
<b>Huſbands</b> careful of the chaſtity of their wives	94
may be too careful of it	109
<b>Huſbandry</b> in the enjoyment of pleaſures	437

## J.

<b>J</b> Anus, his double face	68
<b>Jaropele</b> , duke of Ruſſia, how he liked the treaſon, but puniſhed the traitor	12
<b>Jealouſy</b> exaſperates men againſt incontinence	97
and envy	98
among beaſts	ibid.
of women furious and odious	100, 101, 108
<b>Ignorance</b>	



# I N D E X.

	Page
<b>Ignorance mother of vices</b>	
the mischiefs of not owning it	324
strong and generous	ibid.
its vow in point of devotion	335
a soft pillow for a well turned heart	382
<b>Impotency and insufficiency in a man dissolve his marriage</b>	130
<b>Inclinations natural fortified by education seldom altered and overcome</b>	28
are not always to be followed	38
unnatural not to be believed	366
<b>Inconstancy pardonable in womens love</b>	129, 130
<b>Inconveniencies ordinary are never light</b>	215
of human nature ought not to be preoccupied	352
	353
<b>Indigence has its sweetness and favours</b>	395
<b>Injury professed less hateful than a treacherous one</b>	246
<b>Injustice of the extremest sort according to Plato</b>	342
<b>Innocents punished without the judge's fault</b>	378
<b>Innovation of great lustre</b>	316
<b>Inquiring after truth man's proper business</b>	186
<b>Inquiry, vain, into causes without a certainty of the facts</b>	319
<b>Instruction by contrariety</b>	178
of science	350
of nature	ibid.
<b>Inutility itself not useless in nature</b>	2
<b>Joan, queen of Naples, why she caused her husband to be hanged</b>	130
<b>Italians great restraint of their wives</b>	126
<b>Italian umbrellas</b>	248
<b>Itch</b>	415
<b>Judgment human, a free and roving thing</b>	319
<b>Judgments of other men, appealed to</b>	202
<b>Judges of China, and their offices</b>	379
<b>Justice malicious</b>	3
universal	9
peculiar and national	ibid.
full of error and contradiction	377
formed after the model of physic	378

## K.

<b>Karenti people their distress in copulation</b>	252
<b>Kindred assisting in the executions</b>	114
<b>King of Peru hanged after he had paid his ransom</b>	166
of Mexico taken prisoner, put to the rack, and hanged	167, 168
<b>Kings, why they should not be too profuse in their expences</b>	130
whether liberality and what degree of it becomes them	152, 155
what is properly the royal virtue	154
the more excusable because of the difficulty of their office	173
Kings	



# INDEX.

<b>Things, why they are excluded from the honour resulting from the</b>	<b>Page 174</b>
<b>exercises of the body and mind</b>	
<b>the only thing they learn as much as is necessary</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>how their faults are hid</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>they give the greatest offices at hap-hazard</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>the respect due to them</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>the need they have of an officer to talk freely to them, and</b>	
<b>teach them to know themselves</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Kisses, powerful and dangerous, become contemptible by salutations</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Knowledge of the most curious short</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>honoured</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>a thing of indifferent quality</b>	<b>ibid.</b>
<b>a thing of great weight</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>of ourselves recommended by Apollo</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>of causes</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>of ourselves of great importance</b>	<b>383</b>

**L.**

<b>L</b> Acedæmonian women expose their thighs	94
women more virgins when wives than our daughters	ibid.
Ladies favours, the boasting of them censured	97
learnedly speaking and writing	43
never tempted, cannot boast of their chastity	96
Lais's character of the philosophers	272
Lame people best at the sport of Venus	329
Language common, how it is rendered obscure and ambiguous in covenants, &c.	373
Language, magisterial, to servants reprov'd	41
and idioms set off or enriched by wits	ibid.
Law, from whence rise its doubts and difficulties	373
Laws imperfect relating to the subjects	377
Law general of the world	381
Laws more in France than in all Europe	371
ethic, hard to be taught	355
how keep up their credit	380
ordinarily faulty	ibid.
of Solon	225
multiplicity, fatal to a state	370
of nature the best	371
Law-suits odious	308
Lawyers the pest of a country	372
Laziness hateful	137
of married women	250
Learning bought at a great rate, full of natural weakness	335, 336
Legs of the French gentlemen smaller than others, why	330
Lepidus's wife broke his heart	98
Liberality in a sovereign hand not in its true lustre	152, 155
a virtue imprinted in princes from their youth	ibid.
	Liberality



# I N D E X.

<b>Liberality</b> is of little commendation in princes	Page 155
immoderate	154
what is	ibid.
reproached to Cyrus	155
<b>Liberty</b> becoming ladies, what	104
what is	ibid.
and freedom of speaking never suspected	4
<b>Liberties</b> , counterfeited, practised without success	9
<b>Library</b> , Montaigne's, its situation and form	51
<b>Life</b> , by what trifling objects the desire of it is kept up	63
exquisite what	25
hidden from the sight of other men	121
divided between folly and prudence	133
only communicated by the working of the belly	208
tender and easily molested	215
ruled by fortune	264
private, why loved	269
what it is	268
limited by Solon to 70 years	423
weak and sottish carried on by rule and discipline	396
the measure of its enjoyment depends on the application of it	437
compared to the harmony of the world	405
ought to be loved and cultivated	439
<b>Lion</b> harnessed to a coach	150
<b>Livia</b> , what she said after she happened to see naked men	93
<b>Living well</b> , man's master-piece	431
by the example of others doth more harm than good	221
<b>Lives</b> of retired men painful and difficult in their duties	27
the fairest, which	442
<b>Locke</b> , the English philosopher's character	376
<b>Lodgings</b> that our author liked best in travelling	262
<b>Loyalty</b> unknown in this age	219
<b>Longings</b> violent of sick persons	401
<b>Losses</b> that befall men by the injury of others are sharp	347
<b>Love</b> the entertainment of the Muses	77
is more animated and lovely in poetry than in its own essence	78
its transports banished from marriage, why	79, 80
being founded wholly upon pleasure, differs therefore from	85
marriage	90
the general tendency of mankind to it	ibid.
edicts at Rome for its service	117
its definition according to Zeno and Socrates	ibid.
makes men beasts	119
which is so inspired by nature should not be condemned	122
of the Spaniards and Italians timorous and secret	ibid.
stimulated by talking of it discreetly	123, 128
should be made by degrees	135
Montaigne's fidelity in it	Love



# I N D E X.

Love foolishly conscientious	Page 135
of this time has little to do with sincerity	136
not sociable with prudence	137
what it is, and how it hurts none but fools	ibid.
augmented by fruition	101
of what profit in old men	140
requires relation and correspondency	141
in its throne, what age	142
its comportment	143
preferred to fear	243
furious to a statue of Venus, and to a dead body	125
Lover having gained his mistress's consent refuses to enjoy her	124
Lucretia's picture of the amours of Mars and Venus	111
Luther's opinion, the disputes about it in Germany	376
Lycurgus the general trustee for his fellow-citizens	237
Lyncestes killed with thrusts of pikes by Alexander's soldiers, while he hesitated in his speech	232

## M.

<b>M</b> agnanimity, wherein it consists	27, 432, &c.
Mahomet II. the murder of his brother	13
Maids restoring their reputations merely by their constancy	97
waiting on ladies ought not to be kept too close	127
dressed up in bashfulness and fear	ibid.
Maladies long and grievous restore the body to a better state	231
Man, learned, and the self-sufficient, man differ	22
his chiefest sufficiency	37
his capacity to be judged of in conversation	198
well-bred is of a compound education	266
why he does not care to know himself	287
cannot fix himself to his mere necessity	334
avoids to see a man born, every one runs to see him die	119
that dares not adore the statue of a saint, if not covered with a veil	118
a fool to be a slave to other men's affairs	289, 290
that is sensible of what he owes to himself and others to	293
ought to know his solid interest	297
ought to limit his desires to be secure from misfortune	300
his true master-piece	431
his folly in aspiring to be more than man	442
made by the gods for their sport	118
his look a feeble warranty	364
Marius nice in his drinking	397
Marriage more necessary, but not less honourable than virginity	20
its bitters and sweets kept secret by the wife	108
dissolved by the impotence or insufficiency of the hus- band	131
not accompanied with the raptures of love	79, 80
	Mar-



# I N D E X.

Marriage betwixt a blind wife and a deaf husband	Page 109
when there is treachery in it	84
Marriages happy	82, &c.
Marriage with a mistress commonly repented of	ibid.
Marriages unhappy contracted purely upon the account of beauty	80
in Italy unhappy, why	126
Mars, his enjoyment with Venus	111
Meals of the ancients very long	421
Meat and dishes in confusion despised	419
Meditation, a powerful study	39
the business and beatitude of the gods	ibid.
Medium prescribed betwixt the hatred of pain and love of pleasure	289
Megabyfus's reproof from Apelles the painter	193
Member of generation consecrated in several ways	91
unruly given to men and women	93
Members of generation, why called shameful	119
Memory of Quatilla	401
natural, helped by one of paper	409
Memnon's definition of virtue	376
Men ingenious in using themselves ill	121
turned into baboons	169
brought together by necessity	224
puffed up with wind	235, 429
Mexicans first lesson to their children	404
Mexico, king's garden and closet	162
Midas, king, his death	66
Mimics	115, 116
Mexico siege	107
Military profession the most pleasant and noble	414
Midwives, the name they go by in France	255
Mind of man engaged or disengaged by trifles	62
determined by mere imaginations and chimæras	63
of various qualities to be commended	41
the publishing its productions should not be too late in life	360
its strict fraternity with the body	71
its extraordinary fables, from whence they proceed	ibid.
ought to be employed with discretion	295
that is generous, cannot stop itself	374
of persons wandering through all sorts of life	387
Miracles counterfeited, what credit they have gained in the world	320 to 323
Miso, the Greek sage's answer on being asked why he laughed when alone	188
Mithridates his flatterers	177
Moderation necessary	4
required in marriage, limited by the queen of Arragon	86
required in pleasures	435
I i 2	Modesty



# I N D E X.

Modesty a foolish virtue in an indigent person	Page 102
and discretion become maids	127
Moly, a beautiful tree	170
Money, opinion as to saving or spending it	222, 223
Montaigne's education from his cradle	419, 420
his honesty and delicacy in point of negotiations,	3, 4, &c.
his behaviour to different parties	7
why he shunned public employment	8
why, and in what manner he proposed to speak so much of himself	21
why his own judgment was the common guide of his actions	30
why he never repented of his conduct	32
why he seldom gave or took advice	33
why he was little concerned at cross events	34
why inattentive to frivolous conversation	39
why he was delicate in the choice of his acquaintance	41, 45
what ladies were most to his taste	46, 48
his opinion of those who blame the freedom of his writings	72
his apology for it	133
his library	51
why he married, though ill-disposed for it	83
why he cared to have no books, when he wrote, more than Plutarch's works	114
why he only wrote at home	115
his discretion and fidelity in his amours	47, 48, 135, 136
how patient he was of contradiction and hearing nonsense	180, 187
his fondness for repartees	201
why he loved travelling	211, 214, 223
his calamitous circumstances in the civil wars	236 to 246, 345 to 349
his fondness for Paris	246
and for Rome	281
yet he looked upon all nations as his countrymen	207
his advantages from travelling	248
why he chose to die abroad rather than at home	255
his preparation for death	260
what kind he liked best	262
his method of travelling	264, &c.
his arguments for his travelling	268, 269, &c.
his reason for painting himself in his proper colours	274
his complaints of his unfitness for public employment	275
his reason for frequent rambling from his subject	279
	Mon



# I N D E X.

<b>Montaigne's gratitude to the dead</b>	Page 282
in what sense he was obliged to fortune	284, 286
the bull which invested him as freeman of Rome	286
his election as mayor of Bourdeaux	291
his character in the office	313
with what care he avoided law-suits	308, 379
why he charged his book with so many quotations	359
the advantage he derived from his honest countenance and conduct	365, 368
what he learnt by the study of himself	380, &c.
the customs to which he was a slave in his old age	396
his fitness to have talked freely to his sovereign	388
the tendency of his Essays to the good both of the body and soul	390
his course of life both in sickness and health	391 to 400
why talking was hurtful to him in sickness	402
why he would not consult the physicians	405
his correction of his sleepy habit of body	413, 414
his hale constitution both of body and mind	415, 416
his dreams rather ridiculous than sad	417
his diet	419, 422, 424
why he sometimes fasted	424
why he preferred dinners to suppers	426
his cloathing and liquors	425, 426
his opinion of the pleasures of the table	428
in what rank he placed those of the body and mind	430
the use he made of life in the general	436, &c. to the end.
college in Paris	277
<b>Moon's motion not determined by astrology</b>	319
<b>Moral lectures despised both by the reader and hearer</b>	271
<b>Mothers ought not to have the education of their children</b>	420
<b>Mother of a family's best accomplishment</b>	250
<b>Mourning very improper about sick persons</b>	257
<b>Muses, the sport and pastime of the mind</b>	52
their connection with Venus	77
<b>Musical, martial</b>	415
banished from tables by Alcibiades, why	428

## N.

<b>N</b> ature, conformity to it is an important precept	368
has rendered actions that are necessary agreeable	431
has no need of fortune	ibid.
obstinate, sensible of no emotion	63
<b>Neorites treatment of dead bodies</b>	350
<b>Neutrality in civil wars neither honourable nor honest</b>	5
<b>Nobility, what</b>	80
<b>Noise no hindrance to men of learning, but a help to study</b>	394
<b>Nudity's wonderful power</b>	93



# I N D E X.

## O.

<b>O</b> Ath of the judges of Egypt	Page 11
Oaths of the ancient philosophers	116
Obedience to good and bad magistrates	276, 278
Obligation burthensome to wise men	242
Obscurity vicious	279
Obstinacy in faults ridiculous and troublesome	187
Office, when badly exercised	294
Offices, important, are not all the hardest	313
Old age unfit for the writing of books	360
Old men should be present at the exercises of young people, why	68
their love feeble and imperfect	130
their wisdom	36
begging of God a vigorous health ridiculous	402, 403
Opinions, men wedded to their own	321
the truest are not always the most commodious	329
Oracles speaking in a double and obscure sense	375
Orators melted into tears by the passion he represents	64
Orchard of ripe apples inclosed within the Roman camp left untouched to the possessor	340
Origen, why he abandoned himself to idolatry	74
Orthography and pointing despised	235
Ostriches harnessed to a coach	150
Oranez, on what condition he quitted his claim to Persia	173

## P.

<b>P</b> Ages brought up in good families as in a school of nobles	127
Pain, its alliance with pleasure	556
vehement even to perfection in the soul of the saints by repentance	139
Paladins	174
Panætius's answer to a youth, who asked him whether it became a wise man to be in love.	137
Panthea, Cyrus's captive, her beauty	306
Paris commended	246
Passengers made use of for judges	371
Passions, the best way to cure them	60, 61
violent raised by trifling causes	309
Pastime, and passing away the time, what is	436
Pegu, kingdom, its women's petticoats	93
Peloponnesian war	54
Persuasion, natural progress	321
Peruvian king's excessive ransom.	166
Periander's extravagant extent of his conjugal love	125
Perseus, king of Macedon, his character	387
Peru, how its last king was treated by the Spaniards	166
the magnificence of its works	170
Petits maitres painted to the life by Seneca	43
	Petro-



# I N D E X.

<b>Petronius, his manner of dying</b>	Page 263
<b>Philip, king, built a city on purpose for the most wicked inhabitants</b>	224
his reproof of Alexander for endeavouring to bribe the Macedonians	156
his atonement for an unjust sentence	378
<b>Philippides, the wise answer he made to king Lyfimachus</b>	7
<b>Philosophy proper for women, what kind</b>	44
its childish opinion concerning pleasures	440
its dignity spoiled by weak minds	192
its foundation, progress, and end	324
<b>Philotas's banter upon Alexander</b>	443
<b>Phryne, the courtesan, how she corrupted her judges</b>	362
<b>Physic, the uncertainty of the art</b>	401
<b>Physicians the pest of a country</b>	372
<b>Physician according to Plato</b>	390
<b>Physicians compared to painters and town-criers</b>	ibid. and 391
<b>Physic, pleasant and grateful</b>	403
the art of	390
<b>Physiognomies favourable</b>	363, 364, 365
<b>Pittacus, the greatest plague he had in his life</b>	108
<b>Plato, the talents he required in the examination of another man's soul</b>	387
his definition of a true physician	390
<b>Plague, cruel, in Gascony, and in Montaigne's house</b>	347, 348
<b>Planets conjunction that produced great alterations</b>	170
<b>Plays and public spectacles to humour people</b>	156
<b>Pleasure excusing sin</b>	29
excessively lascivious hinders conception	80
<b>Pleasures, natural, allowed, if moderate</b>	138
<b>Pleasure has no taste without communication</b>	267
painful at the bottom	291
<b>Pleasures provided by nature for men</b>	429
pure, of the imagination the greatest	ibid.
corporeal, of what power	430
human enjoyed by the greatest men	432
<b>Pleasure of the mind to be preferred to that of the body</b>	440
married with Necessity	441
<b>Plutarch, universal and copious</b>	114
<b>Poetry allowed to women</b>	44
armed with love	78
<b>Poets pour out with fury whatever comes into their mouth</b>	107, 280
<b>Polemon, the philosopher's just prosecution by his wife</b>	88
<b>Polity, human, supported by vice</b>	2
<b>Pollio, why he did not write against Augustus who had satirised him</b>	177
<b>Pompey blamed by Tacitus</b>	205
his war with Cæsar	304
<b>Portuguese heady wines</b>	393
<b>Possession of ourselves</b>	240



# I N D E X.

<b>Poverty</b> affected by Crates	Page 220
of some philosophers	298
maintained at the public expence	356
<b>Power</b> content with limits	38
<b>Praise</b> always pleasing	235
<b>Praises</b> given after death, to what purpose	64, 65
<b>Præstantius</b> mentioned by St. Augustin, and why	328
<b>Praxiteles's</b> statue of Venus, how it captivated a youth	125
<b>Precedence</b> either of walking or sitting	258
<b>Presents</b> , an affront not to receive them	241, 242
<b>Priests</b> that cured all sorts of diseases by words and gestures	322
<b>Princes</b> favours by whom despised	307
<b>Prince</b> who was not to be discomposed by accidents	296
<b>Printing</b> in China	161
<b>Privities</b> of criminals tied up to stop their urine	63
<b>Prize</b> of eloquence refused by Tiberius, why	176
<b>Process</b> of two men who pretended themselves the one for the other	244
<b>Profit</b> , public, preferred to justice	17
<b>Prometheus's</b> deficiency in the formation of mankind	66
<b>Promises</b> ought to be strictly observed	237
when they may be lawfully broke	14, 17
<b>Prophet</b> , no man is so in his own country	26
<b>Prose</b> of former times	280
<b>Prosperities</b> are instructions to men	211
<b>Proximity</b> lessens not defects	239
<b>Prudence</b> , what is, according to Plato	384
<b>Punishment</b> of wicked men shews the goodness of the judge	369
<b>Punishments</b> , why they should be inflicted	178

## Q.

<b>Qualities</b> , sickly, of our being	2
<b>Quarrels</b> for trifles cause of great ruins	309
<b>Quartilla's</b> bad memory	401
<b>Quito</b> , the magnificent road from it to Cusco	176

## R.

<b>R</b> ank in life, how we are imposed on by it	196
<b>Ransom</b> , excessive, of the king of Peru	166
<b>Reading</b> of history good and profitable in all times	191
<b>Reflection</b> necessary in actions	300, 301
<b>Reformations</b> , external	29
<b>Refusal</b> of a present injurious	241, 242
<b>Regulus's</b> great high life	173
<b>Remedies</b> more troublesome than the disease	399
<b>Repentance</b> following the sin	24, 25
what it is	20, &c.
commonly corrupt	29
of the Stoics	31
<b>Repent-</b>	



# I N D E X.

Repentance is not concerned in things that are not in our power	Page 31, 32
true, what is	ibid.
hateful, which old age brings	34
from whence produced	ibid.
Repetition troublesome	231
Reproaches redoundable upon those that throw them	188, 189
Retirement the good use of it	44
its pleasures	216, &c.
Revenge, sweet passion, and of great impression	59
taken on a woman in lying with her	126
Reward of virtuous actions groundd upon the approbation of others	22
Riches of the Indies of little revenue to the prince	168
solicitude about them favours of avarice	222
Riding the great horse, the only true exercise of the sons of princes	175
Romans, why they denied triumphs to the generals who obtained great victories	194
Roman senate's violation of a treaty of its own making	16
state its destiny	229
soldiers suffocated with their own hands after the battle of Cannæ	350
Rome, the common and universal city	283
its great men and ruins	283, 284
Royalty stifles and consumes all the other true and essential qualities	176

## S.

<b>S</b> aturninus what he said to the soldiers when they chose him to be their general	276
Sarmatian ladies when allowed to lie with a man	127
Sciences treat of things too finely	114
Science, natural, sufficient to live easily	335
sophisticated	350
Sciences strangely abused	185
the most terrestrial and low	443
Scipio plays at quoits, &c. with Lælius	ibid.
a great sleeper	414
Scratching, sweet gratification of nature	415
Scriblers, French	113
impertinent and foolish	209
ought to be punished as well as vagabonds and idle persons	ibid.
Scribling, sign of a disordered and licentious age	ibid.
Scythian women made use of their slaves, having first put out their eyes	101
Sea sickness, cause of it	146
Secrets of princes troublesome burthens	7
Security of a place how known	230
	Sejanus's



# I N D E X:

Sejanus's daughter ravished by her executioner	Page 14
Seneca's diet for a whole year	395
efforts against death	336
Senses proper judges	190
Sentences more criminal than the crimes themselves	378
Servants hanged for betraying their master	13
Shades of the Persians	249
Sick persons, how they ought to behave	261
Silence very profitable to those that govern	193
Similitude, perfect, not to be found in two eggs	370
Simplicity, cousin-german to folly	353
Sins, impetuous and sudden	31
of complexion and profession	ibid.
Slave thrown from the Tarpeian rock for his treason	13
Sleep without dreams sweet	355
long not wholesome	413, 414
disturbed to be the better relished	437
Sneezing, why God blefs you is said when one sneezes	146
Socrates's opinion of death	56
knowledge, superior to Alexander	27
opinion concerning violence, or wrong done	189
prescription to be easy in life	335
pleading before his judges	355
behaviour at his condemnation	37
his flight	147
what he said on seeing a heap of treasure	298
advice about the charms of beauty	306
way of speaking and living	358
taste for dancing and music in old age	433
discourse and character	332, 334, 430
valour	433
deformity	361
the master of masters	385
oath	116
Soldier's hands frozen fast to a burthen of wood	206
Soldier, delicacy in him is vicious and intolerable	396
Solitude, what is	44, 45
local,	ibid.
preferred to troublesome and foolish company	269
Solon allowed women to prostitute themselves	105
his laws	225
his life	423
Sorcerers dreams	328
Sovereign authority resigned for a moderate fortune	173
Souls by which men ought to be judged	28
in old age subject to more troublesome maladies than youth	36
sublime, not proper for low things	276
stupid, in what consists their happiness	304
Soul ordered and regulated by Socrates	335
	Soul



# I N D E X.

<b>Soul</b> never struck with the pain of the stone, as in other diseases	Page 411, 412
ought to participate of the pleasures of the body	430
<b>Souls</b> elevated by the ardour of devotion and religion	442
<b>Spaniards</b> cruel treatment of the Americans	164 to 168
offers to the new discovered Indians	165
<b>Spanish</b> way of travelling	249
<b>Speaking</b> discomposes the sick and wounded	402
<b>Spectacles</b> , magnificent, of the Roman emperors	157 to 159
<b>Speech</b> read very absurd, and disadvantageous	233
<b>States</b> , nothing more dangerous to them than change	226
how difficult it is to reform them	ibid.
threatened with alteration and revolutions	230
<b>Stags</b> harnessed to a coach	150
<b>Stile</b> of the year offered by the pope to be altered	299, 318
<b>Stoics</b> precepts as to repentance	31
<b>Stone</b> , a disease common to old men, especially men of quality	406
its symptoms, &c.	406 to 409
in what favourable	410, 411, 412
<b>Stoves</b> decried	392
<b>Stubble</b> to be burnt in the fields after the harvest	331
<b>Stupidity</b> of the vulgar and its effects	355
<b>Substance</b> not clearly understood	376
<b>Success</b> whether it is a proof of ability	194, 195
<b>Summer</b> more incommodious than winter, to our author	427
<b>Suns</b> , five, successively created	169
<b>Superfluity</b> , Montaigne's notion of it	265
<b>Superiority</b> and inferiority bound to a natural contest	174

## T.

<b>T</b> Acitus's history and character	204 to 206
Tarpeian rock, a slave thrown from it for treason	13
<b>Temperance</b> ought to be beloved for its own sake	36
<b>Temptations</b> of the flesh powerful and sharp	337
<b>Thales</b> wrongfully censured for advising perjury	74
<b>Thalestris</b> came to Alexander to lie with him	128
<b>Theology</b> of former time	280
<b>Theon</b> , the philosopher walked in his sleep	418
<b>Theramenes'</b> shoe	331
<b>Thief</b> grows rich, and makes satisfaction	30
<b>Thrafonides</b> , a Græcian youth, why he refused to enjoy his mistress	124
<b>Tiberius'</b> amours	48
detestation of treachery	1
trouble of conscience about the religion of his time	205
refused the price of eloquence, why	176
<b>Tigellinus'</b> effeminate preparation for death	263
<b>Time</b> , the physician of our passions	61
ought to be managed	442
<b>Timoleon</b> deputed to cleanse Sicily of tyrants	16
Traitors	



# I N D E X:

Traitors abhorred and punished even by those that have employed them	Page 12, 13
Travelling, who are the best companions in it	267
the Spanish way	249
Travels, when useful and instructive	254
Treachery rejected by Tiberius	1
useful, preferred to honesty	10
wherein it ought only to be excused	11
punished by the Romans	13
revenged upon those that were employed about it	ibid.
Trouble in a state of plenty	265
infinitely painful	412
Truth circumscribed and limited	388
is one, and simple in her ways	9
Turkish madmen proud to debase their own nature	120
Turks military discipline, its severity	341
Tygers harnessed to a coach	159

## V.

<b>V</b> Alour preferred to genealogical nobility	80
Valour military recommended by the laws of Plato, to the special favour of the ladies	144
Variety pleasing	266
Varro, the qualities he requires in guests to make the feast agreeable	428
Venus' statue, by Praxiteles, how it captivated a youth	125
why made a goddess	48
not so beautiful stark naked as she is painted by Virgil	79
what is	117
Vespasian's cure of a blind woman	107
Vessel, rich, purposely broken by king Cotys, why	305
Ugliness of several sorts	361
Vices necessary in all governments	2, 3
Vice leaves repentance in the soul	23
Vices condemned by reason and nature	24
not subject to contradiction	25
of some men, a lesson for others	178
of kings authorized by their subjects imitation	176
Victories obtained against the Indians	163
Vigilance and activity ought to be recommended to youth	413
Violence of desires hinders the execution of undertakings	297
Virgil's advice to burn the stubble in the fields after the harvest	331
Virgil, with what colourings he paints Vulcan's enjoyment of Venus	79
Virginity the vow of it the hardest to be kept	95
lost without prostitution	104
Virgins could not be put to death at Rome	14
Virtue rejoices good nature	23
is pleasant and gay	72
royal, wherein it consists	154
Virtue	



# I N D E X:

<b>Virtue</b> assigned to the affairs of the world	Page 274
scholastic, unfit for the management of public affairs	275
true and sincere, cannot be employed in the service of a sickly state	276
what it is, according to Memnon	376
<b>Virtuous man</b> , what course he may take in times of confusion	278
<b>Voice</b> , of diverse tones and uses	402, 403
strained before meals wholesome	421
<b>Umbrellas</b> of Italy	248
<b>Understanding</b> , human, compared to Theramenes's shoe	331
very short and weak	159
<b>Unlikeness</b> affected by nature	370
<b>Unsayings</b> , infamous	311
<b>Urine</b> of diseased persons	413
<b>Utility</b> , public, too dearly purchased	15
private, not to be preferred before faith given	17
<b>Utilities</b> proper to men lost, to accommodate themselves to the common opinion	222

## W.

<b>W</b> alk required in a place of retirement	51
War monstrous	338
<b>War</b> betwixt Cæsar and Pompey characterised	304
civil in France destructive	342, &c.
<b>Water</b> of the river Choaspes, beverage of the Persian kings	247
<b>Weavers</b> , women, more lustful than other women	330
<b>Whimsies</b> in use among the mean sort of men	180
<b>Whores</b> kept in temples for the use of those that came to their devotion	91
<b>Wicked men</b> picked out and put together in a city built for that purpose by king Philip	224
<b>Wife</b> complaining of her husband's too frequent addresses	86
the danger of restraining her	109
<b>Will</b> and desire are laws to themselves	8
ought not to be let ought but upon just occasions	290
running on with too keen an appetite ought to be restrained	304
<b>Winds</b> break out of men three several ways	146
<b>Wine</b> , best, in Diogenes's opinion	216
hurtful to sick people	400
<b>Wines</b> most in esteem in Portugal	393
<b>Wine</b> , dashed with water of Cranaus's invention	426
theological and Sorbonnical	432
<b>Wisdom</b> which Montaigne liked	72
commits itself to the conduct of chance	195
its deficiency	269
human, never arrives at her prescribed duty	271
brought again from heaven by Socrates	334
<b>Wise men</b> may be in love	272
	Wise



# I N D E X.

Wife men necessary to help us out of the world	Page 256
man's relation and connection	251
men should be intelligent in the use of pleasure	432
Witch marks	327
Witches	325 to 330
Witholde, a Lithuanian prince, his order that every criminal condemned to die should execute himself	14
Witness among the Romans	321
Woman's head the worst part of her	108
Women, the severe laws imposed on them by the men without their consent	85 to 87
whether they are the better for it	94, 95
what ought to encourage them to be chaste	ibid.
Woman, each thinks herself preferable before another	47
her refusal increases man's love	97
blind cured by Vespasian	207
Women's mourning, what	53
Women are more learned than men in love's business	89
whether they need be learned in the languages	43
what sort of learning is fittest for them	44
their tormenting hateful jealousy	97, 100, 108
whence comes it that men usurp authority over them	134
of the kingdom of Pegu covered below the waste with a cloth slit before	93
prostituted by their husbands for lucre	105
prostituting themselves for an elephant	ibid.
having liberty by the laws to provide for the necessities of life at the expence of their chastity	106
young and beautiful kept three days after their death before they were delivered to the undertaker	125
their policy mysterious	88
their embraces despised	119
fine, in Italy	126
kept very close in Italy	ibid.
changing the title of beautiful to that of good	143
Words moderating the temerity of propositions	324
World in a perpetual motion	20
another, discovered by this	162
new, the genius of its inhabitants when first discovered	ibid.
cruelly treated by the Spaniards	164 to 168
its existence divided into five ages	169
is a school of enquiry	187
unwilling to be cured	226

## X.

<b>X</b> Enophon relieved and saved in the Delian Battle	433
Xerxes's silly proposal, when environed with all human delights	429
Year	Year



# I N D E X.

## Y.

**Y**ear cut ten days shorter Page 299, 318  
Youth, why they ought not to be too delicately brought up 395

## Z:

**Z**eal falsely named 6  
Zeno, his oath 116  
Zeno never had to do with a woman but once in his life 119

F I N I S.























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